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## 2023 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

## Business FINANCING

## MANUFACTURING IN THE HUNTER

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 ABN: 15 112 838 945  
 265 King Street  
 Newcastle NSW 2300  
 PO Box 853, Hamilton NSW 2303  
 Phone: (02) 4062 8133

**PUBLISHER and EDITOR:**

Garry Hardie  
 Mob: 0414 463 125  
 garry@HBRmag.com.au

**ART DIRECTOR:**

Sandie Collie  
 sandie@HBRmag.com.au

**CONTENT MANAGER:**

Jason Duncan  
 jason@HBRmag.com.au

**PRINTING:**

NCP Printing  
 Phone: (02) 4926 1300  
 sales@ncp.com.au  
 www.ncp.com.au

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# From the Editor



Whilst much of the economic chatter is currently around inflation and interest rates, the longer-term issue that must be addressed is productivity if we are to have sustained economic growth. To achieve sustainable real wages growth, productivity must increase.

According to the Productivity Commission productivity fell by 2% in the June quarter and 3.6% over the financial year.

Figures suggest that current productivity is no better than it was in 2016.

In March this year Treasurer Jim Chalmers said that if the current productivity trajectory remains then in 2063 working weeks will be 5% longer and incomes will be 40% lower.

The productivity issue has been a long-term problem in Australia, and we are performing worse than many other countries, falling steadily in measures such as OECD's productivity rankings.

The answer to increasing Australia's productivity is not an easy one, and it is extremely difficult to turn around in the short term. It involves a myriad of factors working together over time to produce sustained productivity increases.

The long-term nature of policy changes and settings to achieve increased productivity is in itself one of the reasons we are failing.

Changes made today may not see real results for a number of years.

Australian Governments have in large been poor in long term planning and are focussed on political returns in the short term in the current election cycle.

Discussions about productivity are not seen as interesting by the electorate and media.

So what is the solution to raising Australia's lagging productivity?

This is not an easy answer, but I would suggest that what we need first is the political will and leadership to not just use productivity as a buzzword but to have a clear long-term plan on achieving productivity increases.

It would certainly help if the major parties could agree on the overall aims and some of policies required to achieve this, although our negative political landscape makes this difficult.

Raising productivity is a major challenge for Australia but one it must achieve if we are to grow economic prosperity and improve living standards into the future.

**Garry Hardie**  
Editor and Publisher

## ON THIS MONTH'S COVER

Hi-Vis Group Managing Director Brett Watson. The Hi-Vis Group was a major winner at the recent 2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards, taking out the Manufacturer of the Year - 50 employees or more as well as Excellence in Manufacturing Capability and Excellence in Sustainable Operations. See further details on the 2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards from page 28 in this issue.



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## New precinct approved in Newcastle West

The West Village development at 711 Hunter Street in Newcastle West has received the go-ahead by the Hunter Central Coast Regional Planning Panel.

The development, on the former Spotlight site, is a joint venture between Spotlight Property Group and St Hilliers, who in collaboration with Plus Architecture have conceived a sustainable and culturally diverse precinct for the emerging western corner of the Newcastle CBD.

The approved project will see the development of the site - currently home to commercial and carpark premises, into a mixed-use precinct with a curated ground plane experience featuring podium levels of retail and commercial tenancies, multi-storey food and beverage opportunities including an open-air bar, and two residential towers home to 257 apartments above.

St Hillier's Development Manager Luke McNamara said West Village is more than a residential apartment development.

"From the outset the development has committed to a significant public art programme that celebrates Newcastle's thriving arts scene combined with a curation of ground plane tenancies. As part of the Development Consent, all retail and food and beverage offerings have pre-approval to operate, including a three-storey venue with an open-air bar. This pre-approval will go a long way to streamlining the process for future businesses seeking to be part of the precinct.

"It was also important that the design was sustainable and 'future-ready', with the development committing to 90 MW of rooftop solar panels and 300 electric-vehicle-ready car parking spaces, making it the first development in Newcastle to strive for 100% of future residents and commercial staff the ability to charge their vehicles. It will also feature an end-of-trip facility, and

around 300 bicycle parking spaces in both secure and public areas," Mr McNamara said.

The approved development will also allow for the return of a large swathe of public domain back to the community at the ground plane, with an urban plaza fronting National Park Street featuring the public art precinct, and a through-site connection to the Drill Hall Gallery and Birdwood Park.

Essential to the design process by Plus Architecture was the Government Architects

Design Competition process, the first of its kind for a private development in Newcastle. Other features included the incorporation of a suite of sustainability features, a ground plane allowing for a mix of creative business, designers, coffee shops, galleries, restaurants, and public art.

Plus Architecture Director Rido Pin believes that the practice's approach will be an asset to the community.

"As Newcastle, like other regional hubs across Australia expand at pace, it's critical that new developments are designed with their long-term future in mind and consider the varying and changing needs of their users," he said.

"Our two-tower design, featuring iconic sculptural curves, will create a landmark destination for the whole community - Newcastle locals and visitors alike."



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## \$225 million international distribution hub in Newcastle

Brisbane-based property investment firm Sentinel Property Group plans to develop a new \$225 million international distribution hub in Newcastle at 51-71 Industrial Drive in Mayfield. The large-scale project to subdivide 14.3 hectares of land has recently gained approval from the City of Newcastle after changes were made to their original application.

"Sentinel's Newcastle Port Logistics Hub presents large vacant lots adjacent to the Port of Newcastle's future deep water berthing and container handling facilities, and it is a natural distribution hub for national and international companies due to its location and access to key infrastructure," said Warren Ebert, CEO at Sentinel.

"The Port of Newcastle is set to become Australia's leading deep-water port with the development of the Newcastle Deepwater Container Terminal (NDCT), with berths and a quay line capable of supporting multiple Post-Panamax vessels and the much larger Ultra Large Container Vessels (ULCVs) now operating around the world."

"There is adjacent land for high density container stacking. The project is forecast to deliver \$2.5 billion worth of economic activity to Australia."

The project area is situated adjacent to the newly expanded Port of Newcastle container terminal and plans to offer purpose-built turnkey solutions with direct access to sea, rail, road and air transport infrastructure.

It is also adjacent to the Sentinel-owned Newcastle Industrial Park at 51 Industrial Drive, which has multiple buildings on a former BHP site with 115,797 sqm of area incorporating office and high clearance warehouse accommodation, with Onesteel as the major tenant.

## Glencore's 2023 Indigenous Employment Pathways Program

Glencore has announced that nine participants have graduated from the 2023 New South Wales Indigenous Employment Pathways Program (IEPP) based in the Hunter Valley.

The purpose of the program is to provide work readiness and training opportunities for Indigenous Australians who live on, or have connection to, the areas in which Glencore Coal operates in the region.

Having completed the 26-week job-readiness training, the nine graduates have secured full-time employment in the region.

Glencore Indigenous Programs Coordinator Carrie Bendeich said the graduates have gained essential job skills and developed a strong foundation for their future careers in the industry.

"This program is designed to create opportunities and inspire Indigenous Australians to reach their career goals," Carrie said.

"The graduation ceremony marks a significant milestone for our graduates, who are now job-ready and poised for career success."

IEPP graduate Brianna Duncan said the program has strengthened her confidence and communication skills.

"There's been a lot of support from everyone I was in the classroom with," Brianna said.

"My confidence has grown more than I could ever have imagined and now I've secured a fulltime role."

IEPP graduate Adam Gould said the program has changed his life by helping him to secure full-time employment.

"I joined the program for a better start in life - for my family and my children," Adam said.

"I knew nothing about mining before I got here, now I know safety, teamwork and how to drive a truck. There's no better job in the world."

Former NRL premiership winning half Scott Prince is the IEPP ambassador, providing guidance and acting as a sounding board for those involved.

"Mining can provide for the community and as these participants have discovered, help establish themselves with a career so they can provide for their own families," Scott said.

"To see how much they've all grown in confidence over the 26-weeks is remarkable. They weren't overwrought by the challenges they faced, and they supported each other along the way."


The IEPP is divided into two stages: training and job readiness. These stages include inductions, medicals, life-skills, leadership training, and on-site work experience, offering career opportunities in a range of roles, from operators to warehouse assistants, trades assistants, and bench support.

NSW IEPP Coordinator Nat Conroy said she is incredibly proud of this year's cohort.


"This isn't just about a job, it's a career path; this is life changing," Nat said.

"I'm so proud of the efforts of our 2023 team, and I can wait to see their achievements in the future."

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## Former Maitland Mercury building set to house new accommodation options

Maitland City Council has endorsed a development application proposing a new mixed use accommodation and function centre along Maitland's High Street. The proposed development encompasses the site of a local heritage item, the former Maitland Mercury building, which sits at the intersection of High Street and Hunter Street. The historic building was home to the newspaper for 170 years before being vacated in 2012.

Under the proposal, 258 High Street will transform into tourist and visitor accommodation, comprising 26 hotel rooms, including nine serviced apartment rooms, a reception, gallery, lounge, bar and dining hall.

Meanwhile, 2 Hunter Street would see construction of a new two storey building for a function centre and commercial tenancies.

The Maitland Mercury has long been a vehicle for local news and information across the Maitland area. Maitland Mayor Philip Penfold said the site's "longstanding affiliation with the Mercury newspaper made it an important part of Maitland's story and history."

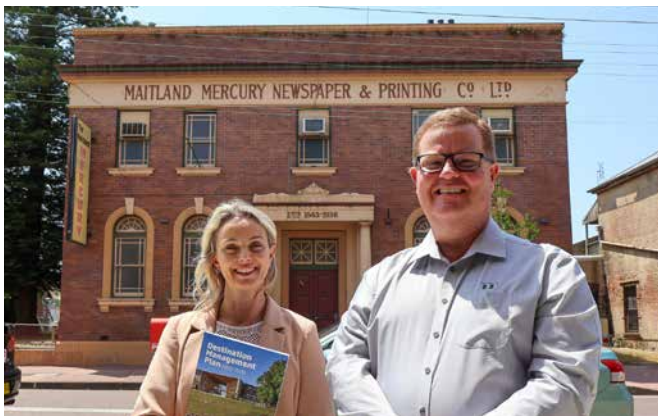
"We're also pleased this development will hold onto and preserve the aesthetic elements contributing to High Street's historical texture.

"The alterations to the rear of the site won't detract from the building's classic late 19th and early 20th century architectural style, found up and down Maitland's storied High Street."

Maitland City Council Manager City Experiences and Economy Caroline Booth said the adaptive reuse proposal would address two important aims to reactivate a 'significant Maitland heritage site' and "deliver more quality accommodation options for visitors to Maitland."

"The community identified the need for more hotel and motel style accommodation options in Central Maitland during engagement for the development of our Destination Management Plan 2030, so we're pleased to see this come to fruition here," Ms Booth said.

*Manager City Experiences and Economy Caroline Booth with Maitland Mayor Philip Penfold outside the former Maitland Mercury building on Maitland's High Street.*



## Dolphin Line Marking acquires Durable Lines

Dolphin Line Marking, a leading provider of high-quality line marking solutions, has announced its strategic expansion through the acquisition of Durable Lines a Port Macquarie based business, a move that significantly enhances its presence from Central Coast and the Hunter to other key regions including Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Murwillumbah, Port Macquarie, Taree, Forster, and Kempsey.

This buyout combines the Dolphin Line Marking reputation for quality and durability with Durable Lines' expertise in line marking services. The collaboration allows Dolphin Line Marking to extend its services to new territories, ensuring businesses



*Peter Siegmund, owner of Dolphin Line Marking*

and communities benefit from vibrant yellow lines, solid white markings, precise lane delineations, efficient car park layouts, and disabled parking line markings.

"We are thrilled to welcome Durable Lines into the Dolphin Line Marking family," said Peter Siegmund, owner of Dolphin Line Marking.

"This acquisition not only strengthens our market presence but also reinforces our commitment to providing 'Lines that Last.' We are dedicated to ensuring safety, responsiveness, and quality in every project we undertake."

This expansion marks a significant milestone for Dolphin Line Marking, reaffirming its position as an industry leader in delivering enduring line marking solutions.

## Local lawyer receives Specialist Accreditation

Roberts Crosbie Mortensen Lawyers has announced that Director and Principal Solicitor, Amanda Crosbie has been recognised by the Law Society of NSW as being a true Specialist in her field having recently achieved Specialist Accreditation in Business Law.

Amanda joins three other Accredited Specialists at Roberts Crosbie Mortensen: Director, Sam Roberts, Principal Solicitor, Tony Peterson and Senior Associate Solicitor, Jack Lindgren, who holds Specialist Accreditation in Commercial Litigation.

Amanda's Specialist Accreditation in Business Law makes her one of only five lawyers in Newcastle to achieve this status and an expert resource for the close to 20,000 businesses in the Newcastle and greater Hunter Region.

Amanda started her career in Commercial Litigation and over a number of years was progressively exposed to Business Law, an area she was immediately attracted to.

"I enjoy getting to know a client's business and working with them to progress a transaction or to determine and implement a strategy to achieve their objectives," Amanda said.

Amanda has been a Director at Roberts Crosbie Mortensen for the last 4 years.

"Amanda Crosbie is an incredibly talented and bright Corporate & Commercial Lawyer and it doesn't surprise me in the least that she obtained her Specialist Accreditation, not only on the first attempt but also whilst heavily pregnant. We cannot wait to have her back in the office in 2024," Managing Director Sam Roberts said.



## Kings Engineering: A Remarkable 100-Year Journey

Kings Engineering, a prominent Hunter-based engineering firm, has announced the celebration of its remarkable centenary in business.

Established in 1923, Kings Engineering has stood the test of time, marking a century of unwavering commitment to providing top-tier engineering services across mining, tunnelling, infrastructure, rail and manufacturing.

Kings Engineering has experienced enormous change along their 100-year journey; from the invention of ballpoint pens and spiral bound notebooks to computers and cordless tools; but they have remained steadfast in their purpose of providing general engineering and repairs to industry, just like they said in their first newspaper advertisement in 1923.

Kings Engineering Operations Manager Roger Ness-Wilson says Kings Engineering has a proud history of engineering excellence in the Hunter and this continues in 2023.

"This business was founded to support local industry and we have proudly grown to support industry across all Australia, and we hope soon internationally. Keeping machinery in productive use for our customers by overhauling, repairing or replacing key components is what we have been doing for 100 years."

Kings was founded in 1923 and operated out of a small engineering workshop in Maitland. In the early days they completed all types of work on steam, gas and oil engines, coal pit machinery, farming implements and maritime specialist work.

In a world that did not have the luxuries of global supply chains and freight services, local engineering expertise and the ability to manufacture and repair parts was highly sought after. These attributes saw Kings contributing to WW2 efforts and Kings manufactured large gun barrels during the war.

The business had outgrown the Maitland CBD and around the turn of the Century relocated its operations to much larger workshops in Rutherford.

By that time, Kings had become a critical supplier to the mining industry, but they also used their underground mining experience to develop expertise in tunnelling and infrastructure, along with rail and manufacturing. Kings has recently contributed to some of the state's largest infrastructure projects through its expertise in repairing and overhauling roadheaders. These machines are used to create the huge tunnels that are the centrepiece of many large state infrastructure projects.

"Yes our tools and techniques have changed, but our approach has remained the same. We equip our business for a bright future by embracing change, investing in our people and quality equipment so we can maintain and build on the capabilities of our machining, overhaul and component workshops. With high demand for Australian based manufacturing, in the last 18 months alone, we have invested more than \$2.5 million dollars in new equipment.

Our workforce is now 75 people and counting at our Rutherford workshop, and we have one of the most sought after apprentice training programs in the Hunter region."

"As part of our centenary celebrations, we recently hosted a Family Day for all our staff and their families, providing a fantastic opportunity to unite and reflect on our remarkable journey over the past century."

Brett Lewis, Bloomfield Group CEO, says over the years supporting the mining industry, including in its shift to open cut mining, a strong relationship was built between the founding families of Kings and The Bloomfield Group. This led to the purchase of Kings by The Bloomfield Group in 2006.

"As a proud and successful Australian mining and engineering group, Kings is an integral part of our business. We congratulate the Kings team on this amazing milestone and we look forward to supporting their success over the next 100 years."

"Today, Kings stands as a testament to its resilience and innovation in the engineering industry, with the centennial celebration serving as a wonderful opportunity to reflect on its rich history and be excited for the opportunities the future will bring."

**More information about Kings Engineering can be found at:**  
<https://www.pwgking.com.au/>

### 1923 Highlights

- **January:** USSR is established.
- **February:** The burial chamber of Tutankhamun is opened and the sarcophagus is found.
- **March:** The first issue of Time magazine is published.
- **April:** Insulin becomes widely available for the treatment of diabetes.
- **May:** Women wearing trousers is legalised in the US.
- **June:** Harry Houdini frees himself from a straight jacket while hanging upside down.
- **July:** The Hollywood Sign is dedicated, reading Hollywoodland at this time.
- **August:** Enrico Tiraboschi becomes the first person to swim the English Channel westward.
- **September:** Interpol is formed.
- **October:** The Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio is founded.
- **November:** The eternal flame for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is lit under the Arc de Triomphe.
- **December:** Kings Engineering advertises for the first time in the Maitland Mercury on 22 December 1923

*The photo with Ian King, grandson of founder Percy King and former long-term employees was taken at the recent Family Day: Basil Hodgson, Greg Eyb, Weston Doley, Gordon Swinton, Brian O'Keefe, Ian King (grandson of founder Percy King), Phil Lambert (current Machine Shop Manager), Phil Jones, John Skinner, Graham Skinner, Trevor Anderson.*



# Proudly celebrating 100 years of engineering excellence



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## University of Newcastle awards contract for new Central Coast Campus

Work to deliver the University of Newcastle's new, high-tech Central Coast Campus in Gosford is another step closer, with the appointment of the main works contractor Hansen Yuncken.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said the tender process was highly competitive and the University was pleased to be working with a company that aligned with its strategic values and boasts a track record in delivering contemporary and dynamic higher-education facilities.

"We have a firm vision for our campuses, to meet the needs of our students, staff and community for the future, and providing a space that is vibrant, safe, and accessible to engage and collaborate," Professor Zelinsky said.

"Our new Central Coast campus will be a state-of-the-art education and training facility that will help close skills gaps, increase educational participation rates, and generate new jobs for people living on the Central Coast.

"We are eager to have activity ramp up in this space, with construction in Mann Street scheduled toward the end of 2023."

Professor Zelinsky said the project team would now finalise pre-construction planning, to support the project's construction and ensure the new campus met the needs of students and the community.

"The landscape has changed since we began planning our new campus and we are committed to delivering the campus our community needs and wants, in line with final designs. We're incredibly pleased to be on track to welcome our first students in 2025.

"The new campus in Gosford CBD will allow us to introduce new offerings and align our programs to industry and community needs, giving students more opportunities to complete their university studies on a local campus without leaving the region.

"We are proud to have been on the Central Coast for more than 30 years at our Ourimbah Campus, educating more than 40,000 students during that time. We are committed to the Central Coast, and this new campus will be pivotal in transforming Gosford into a thriving city and create more opportunities for our young people to aspire to and achieve."

Federal Member for Robertson, Dr Gordon Reid MP, said this is a major milestone for the new Central Coast Campus and it will play an important role in the region's growth.

"The Australian Government is committed to improving access to tertiary education for people living on the Central Coast," Dr Reid said.

"Our investment of \$18 million towards the new University of Newcastle's Central Coast Campus will ensure future generations can learn and study closer to home.

"The Central Coast Campus will be state of the art, offer new study opportunities, and help address the skills shortage.

"I welcome the news of the appointment of Hansen Yuncken as the main works contractor and look forward to construction commencing later this year."

Member for Gosford, Liesl Tesch MP welcomes the exciting news that the Mann Street Campus is one step closer to construction, recognising the important role this Campus will play in the future of the Gosford town centre.

"With the opening of the Mann Street Campus, Gosford is set to become a hub of innovation and world-class education, improving access to tertiary education across the Central Coast.

"This campus provides investment right in the heart of Gosford, creating fantastic local education opportunities for Central Coast students.

"The award of the construction contract to Hansen Yuncken is the final step, with construction scheduled to commence by the end of the year. I am eagerly anticipating these exciting works to commence."

The new \$63.8 million, three-storey campus is close to Gosford

Railway Station and bus terminal. It will include a small retail area, café, and accessible open space for students and the wider community.

The Central Coast Campus will be built on the former Mitre 10 building site at 305 Mann Street on land provided by NSW Government's Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation. Funding support includes University of Newcastle (\$27.8 million) and the Australian Government and NSW Governments (\$18 million each).



## Construction kicking off at Medowie's Yulong Oval

Touch Football, soccer and cricket clubs in Medowie will soon be equipped with a new \$2.6 million sports amenities building catering to their current and future needs at Yulong Oval.

The new contemporary designed building will replace the existing amenities and features unisex toilets, an accessible toilet, change rooms, a kiosk, storage, and a room for referees/first aid purposes.

Port Stephens Mayor Ryan Palmer said the design also features an undercover area for spectators within the building footprint.

"These new facilities are like taking a leap into the future, allowing for sporting participant growth for males and females," Mr Palmer said.

"After the buzz from the Women's Soccer World Cup and the success of the Matildas, it's a no brainer that we need to provide facilities that cater to inclusiveness, which is exactly what this new facility at Yulong Oval will provide.

"Once complete, Medowie will be ready to host both local level and state wide sporting carnivals – bring it on we say!" Mr Palmer added.

Port Hunter Touch Football, Medowie Football Club, and Medowie Cricket Club all call Yulong Oval home, and worked closely with Council to design a facility that caters to the sporting clubs' daily needs and provides an all-inclusive space for participants.

Councillor Jason Wells said the new amenities building will be a great asset for the Medowie community.

"It looks like it's going to be such a wonderful facility that can be enjoyed by participants of all ages, their families and friends," Cr Wells said.

"Being involved in local sport in Medowie myself, I know how valuable a facility like this is to the clubs and the wider community – it's such a huge win," he added.

The \$2.6 million funding for this project has been secured through the NSW Government Regional Sport Facility Fund, NSW Club Grant scheme, Stronger Communities Fund and developer contributions

## Maitland city council signs off on new environmental and sustainability strategy

Maitland City Council endorsed its new Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030, marking a major milestone in Council's journey towards a more liveable and sustainable Maitland.

The Strategy is the first of its kind in Maitland, and it outlines realistic goals for improvement that align with both community expectations and State Government targets.

Maitland City Council Manager Environment and Sustainability Catherine Pepper said "it was an exciting step as Council embarks on a range of actions and initiatives centred around the environment and long term sustainability.

"The Strategy provides a roadmap to bolster community health and wellbeing and economic opportunity, through improving the health of our local environment," Ms Pepper said.

"We've identified four themes through the development of this strategy, which we feel form a solid foundation from which Council, the community and local organisations can respond to Maitland's key environmental priorities.

"Our community told us they'd like to see a greater push towards a circular economy where valuable resources are kept in production for longer and wastes are designed out of the system, preservation and protection of healthy green and blue natural spaces, more resilient and liveable communities, and a stronger focus on sustainable living practices."

The Strategy outlines 13 targets that Council will measure and report on over time to track progress.

These include delivering functional biodiversity corridors,

protecting important natural spaces, improving waterway health, increasing canopy cover in residential areas, targeting net zero by 2050 across Council operations, and reducing illegal dumping.

Extensive community consultation informed the Strategy's development.

Over 1000 responses were collected via phone and online surveys in 2022, with this insight playing a big role in shaping the focus, strategic direction and actions we've outlined," Ms Pepper said.

The draft version of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy was then exhibited from 28 June 2023 to 26 July 2023, receiving 60 submissions from residents, community groups, businesses and developers.

"This Strategy is a commitment from Council to take action and report back on our progress, across our four theme areas," Ms Pepper said.

"We want to see Maitland be known for and proud of its healthy and resilient natural environment, where people and nature can thrive.

"A city that is full of connected communities who have the capacity to bounce back and adapt to hazards and a changing climate.

"Somewhere where the community feel supported to reduce its reliance on non renewables.

"And a Maitland with access to services and facilities that can broaden our circular economy outcomes."

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## \$49,641 raised to support breast care nurses

PKF Sydney and Newcastle, in collaboration with The Newcastle Herald and NEX, celebrated a major milestone as they hosted the 15th annual Hunter Breast Care Breakfast on 25 October. This sellout event brought together a remarkable 510 attendees, all united in their commitment to supporting the Hunter Nurse Education Group. The morning was a resounding success, raising over \$49,641 to ensure the nurses can continue their exceptional work in caring for those affected by breast cancer.

This achievement would not have been possible without the generous support of sponsors and raffle donors, including, gold sponsors Colterlec and Hi-Vis Group, silver sponsors Vlnet, Sharp Office, HunterNet, Beam Bookkeeping and Osborn Law, as well as bronze sponsors peoplefusion, Core Project Group, Skildare, Westpac, EV Consulting, and Solv'd.

Reflecting on the event's success, Simon Rutherford, Partner at PKF Sydney and Newcastle said, "The overwhelming support from our sponsors, attendees, and the community underscores the vital importance of our mission. We are deeply grateful for their generosity and commitment to making a difference in the lives of those affected by breast cancer."

The Fundraiser was first launched as a result of the tragic loss of the wife of one of PKF's partners after a battle with breast cancer. To date, the fundraiser has raised more than \$330,000 and has been commended in Parliament for its significant contribution to the community.

The funds raised at the Annual Breast Care Breakfast remain within the Hunter region and exclusively support the Hunter Nurse Education Group (HNEG). Hunter Nurse Education Group (HNEG). With the funds, the HNEG organises two full education days per year for nurses working with people living with breast cancer. These invaluable education days are extended free of charge and have been empirically shown to not only elevate knowledge and skills, but also change behaviours and attitudes and improve clinical outcomes. The amount of knowledge required to take care of critical patients cannot be obtained simply through experience on a unit or at the bedside.



## University of Newcastle 2023 Alumni Awards

Recipients of the 2023 University of Newcastle Alumni Excellence Awards were recognised at the annual celebration on 12 October to celebrate their accomplishments in exceptional leadership, innovation, and outstanding community contributions.

Eleven recipients from various backgrounds and disciplines received awards to recognise their achievements, including leading international nutritional health work, pioneering astronomical research, and taking the international country music stage by storm.

Speaking on the day after Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said the Alumni Excellence Awards celebrated and honoured members of our alumni community who have positively contributed to their local, national, and international communities.

"More than 171,000 graduates across 153 countries create our University's inspiring alumni network, and these awards were an opportunity to shine a light on diverse and dynamic leaders who have made a profound impact in their fields," Professor Zelinsky said.

"From international business leaders and music industry celebrities to research pioneers and human rights advocates, it was an honour to welcome a group of outstanding alumni from across the globe back to Newcastle last night.

"Last night's Alumni Excellence Awards also gave us the chance to celebrate local heroes like Mark and Kirralee Hughes, who have made an exceptional contribution to our community and have generated millions in funds for brain cancer research through the Mark Hughes Foundation. They remind us that even in the face of adversity, the greatest challenges can be met with hope and strength.

"With many high school students across the state starting their HSC exams this week, the remarkable stories and far-reaching impact of our alumni recipients are an inspiring reminder of what can be achieved with a University of Newcastle degree."

Alumni Medal for Professional Excellence - Laureate Professor Clare Collins AO Laureate Professor in Nutrition and Dietetics, University of Newcastle

- Newton-John Alumni Medal - Morgan Evans, ARIA and CMA-winning country music Singer/Songwriter
- International Leadership Award - Matthew Gain, Senior Vice President and Head, Audible (Europe) Managing Director, Audible GmbH
- Convocation Medal for Exceptional Contribution - Mark and Kirralee Hughes, Cofounders of Mark Hughes Foundation
- National Leadership Award - Professor Getnet Tadele Professor, Addis Ababa University
- Regional Leadership Award - Dr Nicole Nathan, Health Service Manager, HNE Population (MRFF Investigator Fellow, School of Medicine and Public Health)
- Beryl Nashar Young Researcher Award - Dr Alice Grady Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Newcastle
- Indigenous Alumni Award - Karlie Noon PhD Candidate and Indigenous Research Associate, Australian National University
- Young Alumni Award - Steve Adamthwaite, NSW/ACT Water Business Leader, ARUP
- Alumni Award for Outstanding Volunteerism - Dr Aaron Wong, Senior Artificial Intelligence Engineering, 4Tel Technical Chair, Robocup Junior

**More information on all the recipients of the 2023 Alumni Excellence Awards is available on the University of Newcastle website.**



2023 HIA-CSR Hunter Home of the year, Evolving Construction

## HIA-CSR Hunter Housing Awards

Evolving Construction won the pinnacle award at the 2023 HIA-CSR Hunter Housing and Kitchen & Bathrooms Awards, being presented the HIA-CSR Hunter Home of the Year award for a project that neighbours call 'the elegant fortress'.

The Awards were announced on 21 October in front of a capacity audience of industry leaders and peers from across the Central Coast, Hunter and Mid Coast regions.

The Awards acknowledged the talent of designers, builders, contractors, suppliers and manufacturers who plan and construct quality new homes, townhouses, renovations, kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor projects.

Judged by industry professionals, the best of the regions residential building industry were selected as winners in 33 separate categories.

Against strong competition the judges said "...the HIA-CSR Home of the Year showcases the highest quality materials, fixtures and fittings in each room and exceptional craftsmanship is on display at every turn. The home will forever be a testament to the passion, resilience and craftsmanship of the Evolving Construction team."

HIA Hunter Executive Director Craig Jennion congratulated Evolving Construction and all Hunter Award winners and finalists. "HIA members are dedicated to achieving the very best workmanship and standards in every project they undertake. HIA's Awards provide a tremendous opportunity for our members to showcase their projects and highlight building and design excellence," he said.

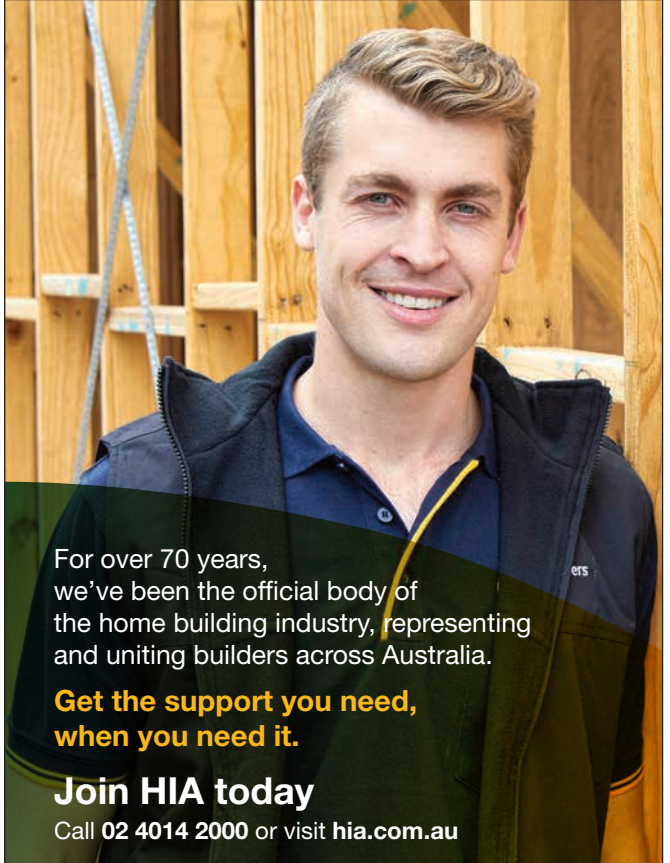
The winners of the prestigious HIA Professional Builder awards were, Walkom Constructions for Professional Small Builder / Renovator, Hudson Homes for Professional Medium Builder / Renovator, and Eden Brae Homes for Professional Major Builder. Callan Burgess was a worthy Apprentice of the Year, while the inaugural winner of two new awards were Planning Portal Solutions for Start-up Business and Scott Mouthaan for Emerging Builder.

Other notable winners included Metricon Homes for Excellence in Showroom Display, Clarendon Homes for Display Home of the Year, Evolve Co Architectural Builders for Renovation/Addition Project of the Year, Valletta Homes for Spec Home of the Year, Hunter Homes for Project Home of the Year and Hunter Coast Homes for Townhouse / Villa of the Year.

In the Kitchen and Bathroom categories Planit Kitchens took out Kitchen of the Year and Sam Horn Building the Bathroom of the Year award. Newcastle Kitchen Magic took out the Cabinetmaker/ Kitchen Manufacturer of the Year award.

Mr Jennion congratulated all 2023 entrants. "HIA is delighted with the exceptional quality of entries and level of competition this year. In a year that has thrown up many challenges all winners and finalists should be proud to have reached the pinnacle of excellence as demonstrated in these awards," he said.

Overall winners in major categories will now represent the HIA Hunter region at the HIA-CSR Australian Housing Awards in 2024 to compete for national titles against winners from other HIA Regions.



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## Local businesswoman major winner at national awards

Jaimie Abbott, a local media communications professional, international keynote speaker and former Port Stephens Councillor, has taken top gong in the Online Business category of the 2023 Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards.

Announced winner of the prestigious accolade at the Awards' National Presentation Evening Gala Event held at the Western Sydney Conference Centre on 23 September, Jaimie accepted the award on-stage before almost 1000 attendees.

Also a Finalist for the 2023 Australian Women's Small Business Champion ICON award, Jaimie was presented with a customised statuette trophy and certificate, and has gained invaluable kudos as a nationally-recognised industry leader.

A presentation skills expert who specialises in attracting high-paying event speaking opportunities for her clients, Jaimie provides media training and public speaking courses and masterclasses.

Her business born from a vision to empower individuals to become confident public speakers and effective communicators includes her hugely successful 'Paid to Speak' online course, which nabbed her the Online Business category trophy at this year's Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards.

Before founding her business, Jaimie worked as a broadcast journalist, political media advisor and a communications advisor for the Royal Australian Air Force. Jaimie has also served as an elected independent Councillor on Port Stephens Council and is a published author, academic and regular media commentator who is also involved with various volunteer groups.

"I was once asked to speak at an event that I thought I just couldn't take on at the time; so, I quoted a fee of \$30,000 thinking the client wouldn't accept such a steep amount for one day's work. To my surprise, my quote was accepted within 45 minutes and it was at that point that I realised I had been undervaluing my offering," Jaimie said during her acceptance speech.

"My advice to the small business women of Australia is to respect your worth and don't undersell yourself because women in particular tend to do so," she added.

This year marks the second consecutive year of the Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards – a prestigious and comprehensive programme that celebrates the growing number of Australia's most inspiring and influential women in small business.

"There's no doubting the rising success of female-led small businesses from all corners of this country," said Steve Loe, Awards Founder and Managing Director of Precedent Productions, which coordinates the Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards.

The Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards saw thousands of entries this year and honoured the achievements of a total of 65 category winners from a broad cross section of industries. Additionally, four individual category winners were recognised at the red-carpet event, which was hosted by journalist and broadcaster, Deborah Knight.

Jaimie Abbott



## Cessnock City Council announces latest visitor economy grants

Cessnock City Council has announced the recipients of the third round of Visitor Economy Grants, following the recent council meeting.

These grants are a pivotal part of the Council's ongoing commitment to promoting local tourism and supporting initiatives that contribute to economic growth within the Cessnock Local Government Area.

City of Cessnock Mayor Jay Suvaal expressed his enthusiasm about the Visitor Economy Grants program.

"Our region has so much to offer, and these grants help us to harness our potential," Cllr Suvaal said.

"By strategically supporting projects and events that increase visitation, extend visitor stays, and create job opportunities, we are actively enhancing the economic wellbeing of our community."

The annual Visitor Economy Grants and Sponsorship Program has a clear and targeted focus: to expand the visitor economy where opportunities are ripe and maximum benefits can be achieved.

The recipients of the latest round of grants are as follows:

- 2023 Postie Bike Grand Prix Documentary Sponsorship: \$5,000
- 2023 Wine Country Talent Quest Sponsorship: \$1,500
- 2024 Wildlife Park Community Day Sponsorship: \$10,000
- 2024 Wavemaker National Conference Sponsorship: \$7,500

By investing in initiatives that increase visitation, extend visitor stays, and create jobs, the Council is fostering a vibrant and resilient local economy.

## Professor Anna Giacomini elected as an ATSE Fellow

Australia's leading expert on rockfall mechanics and protection design, Professor Anna Giacomini, is among the distinguished cohort of Fellows elected to the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) this year.

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

Extreme weather events are set to spark more rockfall instabilities, requiring big investment to assess and reduce risk to both people and infrastructure. Professor Giacomini's research has directly informed the design of rockfall mitigation measures, such as wire safety netting, as well as design guidelines and management approaches adopted by government and industry.

Professor Giacomini and her team at the University of Newcastle built advanced testing facilities, including a world-first rock fragmentation facility, where they have unearthed important details of rockfall dynamics and fragmentation.

Professor Giacomini's research has wide-ranging applications with substantial economic, social and environmental benefits. Her findings are invaluable to the mining and geotechnical industries, where workers operate in close proximity to rockfaces.

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



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# Community Radio Listener's Survey, conducted by McNair Yellow Squares - Newcastle - Survey 2023 Wave #1

# COMING EVENTS.....

**20 November 8:30 am – 21 November 2023 4:00 pm**

**ActionCOACH and BGB  
Business Excellence Summit**

Venue: Chateau Elan at The Vintage Hunter Valley

Cost: \$952.22

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/business-excellence-summit-tickets-653629793307>

**21 November 2023, 7.10 am – 8:45 am**

**nfp connect  
November Breakfast**

Venue: Soul Hub Newcastle

<https://www.nfpconnect.com.au/event/2023-nov-breakfast/>

**21 November 2023, 5.00 pm – 7:00 pm**

**HIA  
Industry Trade Night**

Venue: Port Stephens Toyota

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

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/hunter-nsw/2023/hia-information-session-port-stephens-nov21>

**23 November 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-newcastle-nov23>

**23 November 2023, 5.30 pm – 7:30 pm**

**Hunter Water  
Hunter Water's Customer Service Strategy presented by Matt Hingston**

Venue: NewyTechPeople

Cost: Free

<https://www.meetup.com/en-AU/debrief/events/296574260/>

**28 November 2023, 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm**

**Business Hunter  
Hunter Nexus**

Venue: Great Hall, University of Newcastle

Cost: \$165 - \$1500

<https://events.humanitix.com/hunter-nexus-nov-23>

**30 November 2023, 8:00 am – 9:30 am**

**HunterNet Cooperative  
Business Practices Forum – Field Services Innovation**

Venue: HunterNet Cooperative

Cost: Free

<https://events.humanitix.com/business-practices-forum-field-services-innovation>

**5 December 2023, 10:30 am – 4:30 pm**

**Newcastle Business Club  
2023 AGM**

Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club

<https://www.newcastlebusinessclub.com.au/event/2023-agm/>

**5 December 2023, 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm**

**Newcastle Business Club  
Newcastle Business Club Luncheon**

Venue: Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club

Cost: \$75 - \$85

<https://www.newcastlebusinessclub.com.au/events/>

**30 January 2024**

**Research Society  
International Conference on Economy, Management and Marketing**

Venue: Boulevard on Beaumont

<https://internationalconferencealerts.com/eventdetails.php?id=2190847>

**8 February 2024**

**ASAR  
International Conference on Humanities, Social Science and Business Management**

Venue: Boulevard on Beaumont

<https://internationalconferencealerts.com/eventdetails.php?id=2148504>

**27 – 28 February 2024**

**Research Society  
International Conference on Business Continuity Management and Disaster Recovery**

Venue: Boulevard on Beaumont

<https://internationalconferencealerts.com/eventdetails.php?id=2221208>

## ARE YOU ORGANISING A COMING BUSINESS EVENT?

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

# Hunter businesses review your contracts: Changes to unfair contract terms in effect from 10 November

The primary effect of the Amendments is that more contracts will be considered small business contracts and the primary consequence of the Amendments is the introduction of significant penalties that businesses could face if they make a contract with, or seek to rely upon, an Unfair Contract Term (UCT).

## The changes

The changes significantly expand the definition of “small businesses” so that the unfair contracts regime will apply whenever one of the parties has:

- less than 100 employees, and/or
- turnover of less than \$10 million.

This means that more Hunter businesses will now be captured by this regime. Businesses will also be subject to significant penalties if their standard form contracts include unfair contract terms after this date, including fines of up to \$2.5 million for individuals and \$50 million for companies.

## What Hunter businesses should do

If your business uses standard form contracts it is important to engage an experienced Business Lawyer to review any standard form contract that your business utilises to ensure there are no unfair terms.

## The UCT Regime

For a business to rely upon the UCT regime, the business must have entered into a contract which is both a “standard form” and “small business contract”.

## What is a Small Business Contract?

The new definition of a small business contract under the Amendments, which will apply to all contracts that are entered into, renewed or varied from 10 November 2023, is a contract that satisfies all of the following criteria:

- the contract is for the supply of goods or services, or a sale or
- grant of an interest in land; and
- at least one party to the contract satisfies either or both of the following conditions:
  - o the party makes the contract in the course of carrying on a business and at a time when the party has fewer than 100 employees; and/or
  - o the party's turnover for the last income year that ended before or at the time when the contract is made is less than \$10,000,000.

## What is a Standard Form Contract

Currently, the Australian Consumer Law provides little guidance as to what these words mean, however, most understand that a standard form contract is a contract containing a set of terms and conditions issued on a repetitive basis to multiple people, for example membership application forms.

## What is an Unfair Contract Term

A term of a standard form small business contract is unfair if the term:

- causes a significant imbalance in the parties' rights and obligations under the contract;
- is not reasonably necessary to protect the legitimate interests of the party who would be advantaged by the term; and causes financial or other detriment to a party if applied or relied on.

In applying the above test, the Court may take into account such matters as it thinks relevant, but must take into account the:

- extent to which the term is transparent; and
- contract as a whole.

## Remedies and Penalties

The outcome of a standard form small business contract being held to include unfair terms has, until now, been that those terms will be considered void and unenforceable. From 10 November 2023, not only will the terms be void, but businesses can also receive penalties for contravention of the UCT provisions, with each UCT contained in a contract a separate contravention (making the combined pecuniary penalty potentially very large).

**For further information contact Roberts Crosbie Mortensen Lawyers on 1300 553 343, email [hello@rcm.com.au](mailto:hello@rcm.com.au) or visit [www.rcm.com.au](http://www.rcm.com.au)**

# Information: Your key to business finance

**Andrew Beattie**  
**PKF Sydney and Newcastle**

A business owner needs more than just information... they need the RIGHT information.

So many business owners aren't getting what they need, presented in the right way.

Before determining WHAT information you need, it's critical to understand WHY you need it. Fundamentally; what are your goals, both for your business and your life? Not just retirement – but in the years from now until then. Once you can articulate these, the information you need to achieve them should become clearer.

Some information must be compiled for statutory reporting, but an annual tax return and set of financial statements won't give you what you need to run your business – especially months after year end. Neither will management reporting if it only shows actual results and isn't received in a timely fashion.

Operationally, strategically; you need to make decisions, obtain funding and insurance, manage cashflow – you need contextual, relevant and current data to use with your team and advisers, focusing on the past only in-so-much as it can be used to impact the future.

We've taken on clients who rarely heard from their previous accountant unless it was time to sign something; or worse still, given regular reporting packs they weren't sure what to do with.

Good reporting utilises a three-way budget (profit and loss statement, balance sheet and cash flow statement), comparing actuals to budget and prior periods, giving relativity and identifying trends. It's good to understand why the numbers are what they are, but more important to understand how to change them going forward.

This is even more important when it comes to financing; the Royal Commission into banking has recommended "no additional statutory obligations should be imposed with respect to the making of loans" to small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

And yet, it seems harder to source funding; more hoops to jump through, lower loan-to-value ratios (LVR), difficulty with interest-only debt, personal guarantees required. The Financial Review anecdotally confirmed what "appears to be an unintended consequence", with businesses "blaming the royal commission for causing nervous banks to slow lending".

And so, more than ever, information presented to lenders needs to tell a story and make a case in order to get the result. Very simplistically, lenders want to know:

- Who are we lending to?
- What are the funds being used for?
- How and when are we getting our money back (repayments/security)?
- and numbers in isolation can't address those points.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to business reporting, but there is a 'critical minimum' every business owner should be looking at. We'd suggest this includes:

- Management reporting – most relevant within two weeks of month end
- Three-way budget and ideally a Funds Flow / Source & Application of Funds – to show you where the money's gone
- Covenant monitoring
- KPI reporting, with someone holding you and your team accountable, exploring how to make practical changes where required.

The majority of accountants provide compliance services the statutory bodies require – but we believe true advisory means taking business owners where they want to go, rather than just reporting on where they've been. We work with many business owners to generate the information they require to make better



decisions and maximise their potential. This service is scalable depending on the needs of the business owner and what's more, with modern technology this is very cost effective.

They say, "there are a million ways for a business to fail". A lack of timely, pertinent and accurate information should absolutely not be one of them.

**For further information contact PKF Sydney and Newcastle on (02) 4962 2688, email [abeattie@pkf.com.au](mailto:abeattie@pkf.com.au) or visit [www.pkf.com.au](http://www.pkf.com.au)**



**Andrew Beattie** is a Director at PKF Sydney & Newcastle. He leads the Newcastle Business Advisory Services and Corporate Finance teams, with over 20 years of experience in the accounting, business advisory and banking professions. Andrew's specialist experience and knowledge are predominantly in the areas of business improvement, management consulting, strategic planning, succession planning and sale readiness, corporate finance and business valuation. Andrew works with clients nationally across many industry sectors including Health, Pharmacy, Veterinary, Mining Services, Professional Services and Construction.

# Finance secured, now let's keep it secure!

**Paul Juergens**  
Newcastle Permanent

You've secured your business finance and are ready to hit the ground running, but some of the emails making their way into your inbox don't seem quite right...

While you often hear of scams targeted at individuals, businesses are just as susceptible. So, what should you be vigilant about when it comes to your business?

Scams are ever evolving, but there are some common red flags to always be on the lookout for.

## Asking for identifying details and passwords over the phone

No legitimate business should be asking for this kind of information over the phone; in fact, many emphasise in their correspondence that they will never do this. This is your first red flag – the second is when the caller continues to demand this information, or even becomes angry or aggressive when you refuse.

## Beware the unknown email – and anything attached to it

You may have seen these appear in your personal email before, and they are just as likely to be sent to businesses – “click here to view our office supply range”, or, “see the attached PDF for our advertising packages”. Clicking through may actually install malware on your device, and from there a scammer can access your files, record your keystrokes, send correspondence from your accounts.

## New bank account or address for an old contact?

It's not unusual for clients or vendors to move addresses or use a different bank, account but it's also a play straight out of the hackers' handbook. While the invoice may look legitimate, a little change like this may be sign that your vendor has been compromised – likely by malware – and by sending your product to a new address or money to a new account, you may actually be putting it directly into a thief's account.



## So what can I do?

Prevention is always better than cure and luckily there are simple measures you can put in place to help protect your business.

Add simple checks and balances for even the most basic processes. Paying an invoice? Include a secondary approval process for money to be transferred. Have an online account which contains sensitive data? Set up multi-factor authentication for additional security.

Even for something as simple as a client relationship that only exists via email, it's worth picking up the phone for a chat every now and then to maintain a secondary line of communication – all while strengthening a business relationship.

Strong record-keeping will hold you in good stead in the event you are sent a false invoice or refund request, while ensuring your contact database is up-to-date – by always confirming banking details and addresses – will help you keep you from paying a scammer who has hacked one of your vendors.

Finally, if an email, phone call or other form of contact doesn't seem legitimate, it probably isn't. If you have any doubts about any form of correspondence you have received, hang up – or stop responding if it's online – and simply contact the company through their official methods.

While it seems like a scary world of scams out there, keeping yourself informed and exercising due diligence will go a long way in keeping your business safe.

**For more tips on how to get the most out of your new venture, visit [newcastlepermanent.com.au/hub/business](http://newcastlepermanent.com.au/hub/business).**

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**Paul Juergens** is the Chief Distribution Officer at Newcastle Permanent. He joined Newcastle Permanent in 2019 after a wealth of experience in banking, including senior positions at Bank of Queensland, National Australia Bank, St George Bank and ANZ



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## Regional Australia Bank donates over \$2.75 million to regional communities

With a focus on local communities, Regional Australia Bank has given back over \$2.75 million dollars in donations to regional communities through their Community Partnership Program.

The Regional Australia Bank Community Partnership Program provides financial assistance to community groups across Regional Australia allowing them to focus on what they do best rather than fundraising. Members choose the local community organisation they wish to support from a list of 1,900 registered groups and causes. The amount donated to each group is calculated by crediting an additional 1% 'interest' on the average monthly balance of nominating member account balances.

Now in its 15th year, the Community Partnership Program has grown with the Regional Australia Bank. It started out as an idea to demonstrate the good that money can do within local communities. In 2018 just over \$1 million was donated. This year, the bank gave away almost \$2.75 million dollars to community groups in regional NSW.

The scope of recipients is very broad. The Community Partnership Program reaches over 1900 community groups in regional NSW. These range from sporting groups, healthcare support groups, arts groups, preschools, animal shelters and more.

Regional Bank Australia CEO David Heine says that they receive extremely positive response from the local community.

"The feedback we receive from the community is immensely gratifying," said David.

"Each of our sponsored community groups have an amazing and often emotional story to tell. To be able to stand alongside



them is a privilege that we hold dear. Every dollar that we are able to donate is another sausage sandwich they don't have to sell or another regional family that they can assist.

"The community Partnership program is a great example of why I love leading the team at Regional Australia Bank. I challenge any of the other financial institutions to follow our lead and donate nearly 10% of their profits where it really matters – in our communities. We truly are here to empower regional Australians, we live and breathe the local spirit, and it feels bloody great."

Customers that have a transaction account with Regional Australia Bank are encouraged to be a part of the Community Partnership Program. Community groups looking to join the program are also welcome to enquire about the possibility of receiving a share of the donations.

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We are currently seeking support for the 2024 edition of the Hunter Business Investment Prospectus, the annual hard copy and online publication that promotes the Hunter Region as a smart business, investment and lifestyle choice.

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or email  
[garry@HBRmag.com.au](mailto:garry@HBRmag.com.au)

Have you read the 2023  
edition of the Hunter  
Investment Prospectus?

The 2023 edition can be read online at <http://www.hunterinvest.com.au>



## A strong manufacturing industry vital to future prosperity and security

Manufacturing is an extremely important component of the local and national economies and its success should be both supported and celebrated.

As highlighted in the recent 2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards, local manufacturers are successfully developing new solutions for domestic and global markets.

The importance of a strong manufacturing sector cannot be overestimated.

Manufacturing remains a huge direct employer of labour, employing nearly 30,000 in the Hunter. It is an excellent trainer, helping to create a skilled local workforce and maintaining valuable skills. Manufacturing is also an important exporter for the nation. The implementation of modern manufacturing is helping to overcome the issue of high domestic labour costs when competing in the global marketplace. Local manufacturers continually show how innovative they are, coming up with unique solutions for the marketplace.

Manufacturing has a huge economic multiplier effect, one of the highest of all industries and estimated to be as high as five, meaning that the indirect benefits are huge. You may not consider yourself to be in the manufacturing industry, but your business or job may very well have manufacturing to thank for its very existence.

Events in the last few years have highlighted Australia's dependence on international supply chains and the risk that these are impacted by economic or political decisions and upheavals in other countries. From Covid to wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, the world feels more unsettled today than it has in decades.

A strong and diverse manufacturing base in Australia helps the nation to be more self-reliant and less exposed to these impacts that we have little control over.

It should be a priority for all of us to help promote and support a healthy and growing manufacturing sector for our future prosperity and security.

## TAFE NSW students training to maintain defence aircraft

TAFE NSW is partnering with industry leaders to give students the practical skills to maintain Australia's fleet of defence aircraft.

Eight TAFE NSW students, who are working as apprentices at BAE Systems, are taking part in a restoration project to repair a 1943 Catalina plane. The Certificate IV Aeroskills (Structures) students are gaining the qualifications needed to pursue a career as a Structural Aircraft Maintenance Engineer.

BAE Systems maintains and repairs the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) fleet of F-35 aircraft — the world's most advanced fighter jet. BAE Systems will employ more than 350 people directly to support F-35 aircraft in Australia by 2025. These students are getting the skills necessary to help maintain Australia's defence capabilities in the coming decades.

Seventeen-year-old Zachary Hanwright is the youngest TAFE NSW student currently in the Certificate IV Aeroskills (Structures) program. He says he enjoys taking the skills he is learning through his course and putting them into practice on a real plane.

"I really appreciate my teachers lining up these opportunities. It was a really engaging way to learn more about the structural elements of a plane and gain some hands-on training," he said.

"My course is teaching me the skills I need for general aircraft maintenance. My Teacher, Mick also has experience working with F-35's in the Air Force, so he can pass on the knowledge he gained from his experience."

"The work being done to maintain these F-35 planes is crucial to ensuring we have a strong fleet of defence aircraft. When I'm learning these skills I feel like I'm making a difference, as I know this is a really important job and that is a rewarding feeling."

BAE Systems Director of Aerospace Andrew Chapman says their partnership with TAFE NSW is focused on building their future capabilities, particularly in the Hunter region.

"Through the incredible TAFE NSW Newcastle training facilities, combined with our recently expanded Williamstown Precinct, we are cementing this region as Australia's aerospace hub," he said.

"Skilling our future generation is our priority, as this is crucial in our support for the fleet of F-35 aircraft."

"We are currently recruiting for several roles in our trades streams in Mechanical, Avionics and Structures, so it's an exciting time to be training in this industry."

TAFE NSW Aviation and Aerospace Instructor Mick Humphreys says students are learning crucial skills, like disassembling an aircraft, and how to inspect it and identify damage.

"These are important skills they need to know before they enter the workforce and work on planes that are as sophisticated as the F-35," he said.

"We have several ex-military members in our TAFE NSW team who can impart the knowledge they have gained through their experience. We know what they will be working on and the experience they need – so we can prepare them for their future."

## Celebrating 90 years of business with export customers

Whiteley held its 5th Biannual Export Conference in Sydney on 13th September. The 3-day meeting saw delegates in attendance from Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, New Zealand, Japan, Switzerland, and Malaysia attend the conference to discuss business opportunities and prospects for Whiteley products in the international marketplace.

The Export meeting was led by Whiteley's Vice President of International Sales, Greg Pobjoy. Greg concentrated on building and strengthening export customer relationships, product training, education and team building.

The export meeting was held alongside the Whiteley 90-year celebration dinner. The gala dinner was held at Curzon Hall in Marsfield on Thursday 14th September. More than 100 guests were in attendance from key industry bodies, export customers, researchers, academics, and customers.

Associate Professor Greg Whiteley said: "The 90th gala dinner was fabulous for us and our family, I wanted to express my personal gratitude to everyone who joined us to celebrate 90 years of Whiteley. Not many companies get to 90 years of age, but we are one of that rare breed and we look forward to the next 90 years from here."

"On the night we did not have time to canvas all of the on-going work in which our team are engaged but there is much more to follow over the next couple of years."

As Australia's largest manufacturer of sterilants, disinfectants and professional cleaning technologies, Whiteley have been protecting lives and livelihoods since 1933. With its manufacturing facility located at Tomago, Whiteley Corporation is a proud advocate for conducting business in the Hunter Region.

Moving forward, Whiteley Corporation will continue to be a proud export ambassador for the Hunter Region. The company will look to explore new export markets and strengthen the export relationships that currently exist.

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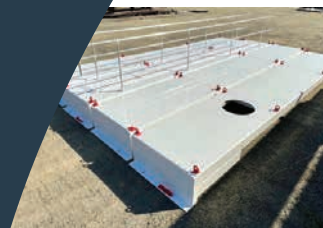
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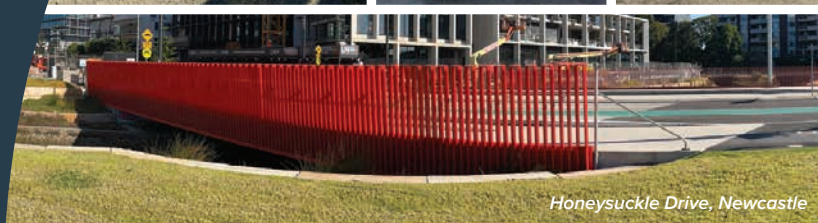


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### Tomago Aluminium Innovation and Excellence Awards

Tomago Aluminium recognised the innovation and excellence of its workforce at its annual Innovation and Excellence Awards on October 6.

A total of 11 awards were handed out covering eight categories. This year three new category awards were added – the Spirit of Tomago Award, Rising Star Award and Leadership Award.

The overall winner is Paste Plant Back to Standard Fitter Blake McNamara for his work reducing resistance in the pin-to-carbon connection, a key part of Tomago Aluminium's manufacturing process, by redesigning the cork holes to have a flat base. The innovation is in place in the company's two paste plants and expected to generate save the business \$310,000 annually. He also took out the individual Excellence in Process Stability & Quality Award.

Mr McNamara has previously been recognised for excellence and innovation taking out the individual Excellence in Health, Safety and Environment Award at the 2021 Awards.

This year's apprentice of the year is fourth year apprentice Nelsen Murray. Nelsen has just completed his apprenticeship. His exemplary attendance, punctuality, work ethic and impressive craftsmanship has earned him consistently high evaluations in all departments in which he has worked.

The inaugural winner of the Spirit of Tomago Award is Security Officer Tony Lewis. Tony has raised thousands of dollars for Variety, The Children's Charity. He goes the extra mile to help colleagues and with any on-site event.

Interim CEO Nigel Backhouse emphasised the crucial role Tomago Aluminium's exceptional workforce plays in driving the business forward. Mr Backhouse acknowledged the dedication, innovation, and continuous improvement mindset displayed by employees, which is vital for the company's long-term sustainability and success.

Mr Backhouse said the remarkable aspect of Blake's innovation is the swift action he took.

"Within a week he was testing it out. Despite an initial setback, Blake persisted and made another attempt, ultimately achieving a successful result that is revolutionising a key aspect of our manufacturing process."

Blake receives a \$21,000 international travel prize and will hold the unique perpetual trophy made from a slice of Tomago's Aluminium billet for a year. Each individual award category winner receives \$2,500 worth of domestic travel and a special trophy. Winning teams receive a special event for their team, a team plaque and personalised ingots.

The award winners were:

#### **Overall Winner**

Blake McNamara, Operator

#### **Excellence in Cost & Waste**

- **Individual** - Danny Oakley, Environment and Waste Technical Advisor
- **Team** - Rod Shop Snap Cuff Conversion Team (Jeremy Sams and Travis Hulm)

#### **Excellence in Health, Safety & Environment**

- **Individual** - Adam Priestley, FRT Project Electrician
- **Team RAO** - Isolation Team (Adam Panton, Matt McDonald and Nicki Hopley)

#### **Excellence in Process Stability & Quality Award**

- **Individual** - Blake McNamara, PP Back to Standard Fitter
- **Team** - Ingot Chain MOJO Maintenance Strategy Team (Aaron Burkett, Ashley Evans, Chad Moremon, Darren Saxby, Gavin Courtney, Mark Carter, Todd Griffin and Travis Collins)

#### **Leadership Award**

Ross Vandyke, Contractor Management Superintendent

#### **Rising Star Award**

Lachlan Snowdon, Reliability Engineer – Electrical

#### **Spirit of Tomago Award**

Tony Lewis, Security Officer

#### **Apprentice of the Year**

Nelson Murray - 4th Year Apprentice.



Blake McNamara



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## Apollo Engineering expands capabilities

With a rich 30-year history as a family owned and operated business, Apollo Engineering has become synonymous with automated parts washers and built a reputation for quality and reliability serving the mining and automotive repair and reconditioning sectors. However, in recent years Apollo Engineering has significantly broadened its offering and capabilities and now offers a wide range of manufactured solutions for businesses of any size.

Their capabilities now incorporate cutting-edge technologies such as profile cutting (laser cutting), sheet/plate folding, CNC machining (milling and turning), and fabrication, among others.

This transformation culminated in the opening of a state-of-the-art workshop. Not only does this workshop significantly increase their production capacity, but it also expands their operational space to a substantial 5,500 square meters under roof. The new workshop features an impressive 17 fabrication bays, complete with specialised areas for the fabrication of their largest machines using overhead cranes. Furthermore, this expansion has facilitated additional growth in the material processing department, with the installation of an additional high-capacity 12 kW Bystronic Fibre laser with sheet automation.

Apollo Engineering's services now include:

- Laser cutting and folding - including up to 30 mm mild Steel, 30 mm stainless steel, 30 mm aluminum, 15 mm brass and 12 mm copper.
- Machining - their sophisticated high volume production workshop and highly skilled team can handle a wide range of complex jobs with high levels of accuracy and repeatability for both one-off jobs and high volume production runs.
- Cut, fold, roll and fabricate - to produce decorative displays right through to heavy duty fabricated assemblies.



- CAD/CAM design - the latest in 3D modelling software and Finite Element Analysis ensures the time from prototype to full production of all equipment is minimised.
- Electrical Circuit and PLC Design - Apollo designs and builds all of their own electrical control boards, including PLC and HMI design.

The newly revealed workshop, located in Tamworth, is up and running and ready to manufacture a diverse array of components for the local community, extending its reach to include the Hunter region.



**Simple manufactured solutions to complex problems.**

**Apollo Engineering** is a family owned and operated business with over 30 years experience in the manufacturing industry.

Through consistent investment in the latest advanced production technologies, we are recognised as a turnkey solution provider for a wide variety of industries.

Whether it is one-off projects or high volume production runs, the team at Apollo is driven to provide the highest quality product and service, everytime.

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### Lockheed Martin selects Nupress for Orion Spacecraft Program

In a significant step for the Australian space industry, Cardiff-based Nupress Group and Adelaide-based Axiom Precision Manufacturing have been selected as global supply chain partners by Lockheed Martin for the Orion spacecraft program, a cornerstone of NASA's Artemis missions to the Moon.

Lockheed Martin's decision to select Axiom and Nupress to supply precision machined components for the Orion program followed a rigorous evaluation process, focusing on their substantial cost-saving proposals, exceptional customer responsiveness and reduced lead times.

Having previously established themselves as industry partners on the F-35 program, Axiom and Nupress were identified as potential partners for the Orion program during a roadshow led by Lockheed Martin's Office of Australian Industrial Participation team.

Since receiving their space quality certifications, Axiom has so far secured one contract while Nupress has already secured two contracts. The contracts were awarded under Lockheed Martin's Global Supply Chain (GSC) Program agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia.

Both companies are poised for growth as they rise to meet the future production demands of this historic endeavour.

The Orion Production and Operations Contract (OPOC), an indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract, encompasses up to twelve vehicles, divided into three or four different orders. Up to six additional Orion spacecraft may be ordered under the IDIQ contract, leveraging production cost data from the previous six missions to enable optimised unit prices.

Warren McDonald, Chief Executive Lockheed Martin Australia and New Zealand, congratulated both firms on their selection for the program.

"Axiom and Nupress exemplify the vast industrial capability available in Australia. Their commitment to quality and innovation aligns perfectly with Lockheed Martin's dedication to delivering excellence. This is an example of how the Global Supply Chain program has allowed us to partner with and provide opportunities for Australian industry to shape the future of defence and space exploration," Mr McDonald said.

Craig McWilliam, Chief Executive Officer of Nupress, commented, "Nupress is honoured to strengthen our partnership with Lockheed Martin through the Orion spacecraft program. This opportunity reinforces our commitment to world-class manufacturing that delivers successful outcomes. We are excited to continue our journey in the space sector and work with Lockheed Martin to support NASA's missions to the Moon".

As Axiom and Nupress embark on this partnership with Lockheed Martin, they play a pivotal role in shaping history by paving the way for the first woman and the next man to set foot on the Moon, transported from Earth aboard the Orion spacecraft.

### Ampcontrol wins Health, Safety, Environment and Community award

Ampcontrol was announced as winner of Health, Safety, Environment and Community (HSEC) People's Choice Award at NSW Mining Annual Parliamentary Dinner on 19 October.

The People's Choice Award was voted for by conference attendees at the NSW Mining HSEC Awards on 7 August 2023 who voted on their favourite winner from the four HSEC Awards.

Ampcontrol was named winner in the Health Excellence Category for DRIFTEX Battery Electric Vehicle for Underground Mining Operations.

Rod Henderson, Ampcontrol Managing Director & CEO accepted the award on behalf of Ampcontrol.

"We are proud to be recognised by our peers in receiving the



NSW Mining HSEC People's Choice Award. Through collaboration and innovation partnerships, Ampcontrol is focused on supporting industry and customers to decarbonise and make net zero a reality. We are actively supporting the resources industry through mining electrification solutions. This includes DRIFTEX, which we can proudly say has the world's first IECEx certified Intrinsically Safe traction battery," said Mr Henderson.

Through radical thinking and collaboration, Ampcontrol has developed the world's first IECEx certified Intrinsically Safe traction battery. Ensuring safe operation of our electric vehicles in Group I hazardous areas. Ampcontrol Electric Vehicle, DRIFTEX, is helping to decarbonise and electrify the mining industry.

Designed and developed in response to growing industry demand for low emissions technology, the Ampcontrol Electric Vehicle DRIFTEX also offers significant health and environmental improvements by removing carcinogens underground.

Ampcontrol is focused on diversifying and growing the business with a key focus on renewable energy manufacturing and how it can support customers in decarbonisation and mine site electrification.



## REAL PROGRESS REQUIRES TOMORROW'S THINKING TODAY

The Emergent Group website says, 'The world is full of challenges' and invites us to 'tackle them together'. That's quite the onerous task, but when we take each challenge one at a time and consider how one challenge interacts with others, we're on the way to finding solutions.

Hunter-based Emergent Group, formerly the Advitech Group, has been applying engineering, science and technology to local and national challenges for 35 years. Emergent Group's engineers and scientists have been working with industry, government and small to medium sized businesses to solve problems across resources, manufacturing, agriculture and other sectors.

The concept of 'emergence' acknowledges that we operate in a complex environment of interactions – between staff, clients, government and broader society – and that it is through these interactions and the resulting web of events, that new possibilities and outcomes are born.

Emergent Group's Executive Director – Strategy and Innovation, Glenn Platt, believes strongly that the combination of creative thinking and diverse perspectives, when applied to a problem, are likely to result in the best solutions.

"If we're going to help industry with the really big challenges of our time, such as transitioning to cleaner energy sources, there's no use in applying yesterday's thinking," said Glenn.

"Fresh ideas and new approaches are fundamental if we're going to move forward and operate smarter, cleaner and more sustainably," he said.

Forward thinking businesses are looking to Emergent Group's companies Advitech, Novecom and Acubis for their diverse skills and demonstrated experience.

Energy company Akaysha, was appointed by the Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo NSW) to develop the Waratah Super Battery, which is one of the largest committed battery projects in the southern hemisphere and most powerful battery in the world.



Akaysha Energy approached Emergent Group to conduct a fire safety study report prior to commencing construction of the facility. The engineering and environmental services arm of Emergent Group, Advitech, has a long history of risk and compliance assessments, particularly when it comes to chemicals and electricity. The team was a perfect partner for Akaysha to engage for this work.

Advitech's combined skills of electrical and functional safety engineering and chemical and process engineering were deployed to assess the proposed battery energy storage system for risks. The team identified significant hazards such as battery cell fire, explosion and toxic gas release.

Advitech provided Akaysha with mitigation strategies for all identified hazards and as a result, the project is considered to have best practice mitigation strategies in place and is safe to commence.

If your business wishes to talk about a proposed energy transformation or you want to explore production optimisation strategies or you have critical environmental factors to monitor and communicate – or any challenge requiring the skills of the Hunter's brightest, give us a call and we'll explore how we can help.

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# 2023 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

Hundreds of leaders and business representatives gathered at NEX in Newcastle on 20 October to recognise and celebrate local manufacturing at the 2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards.

In recognising the winners, HMA Chair Jacqui Daley referred to the chosen theme for this year's awards, "Made in the Hunter, for the World". She said it encapsulates the very essence of what the Hunter Manufacturing Awards stand for.

"In a world marked by increasing demand and government initiatives aimed at advancing manufacturing capabilities, our local manufacturing sector is experiencing a resurgence," Ms Daley said.

"Manufacturers are innovating across a diverse range of sectors, from the medical and food industries to supply chains, embracing smart technologies and revitalising traditional processes."

Ms Daley said HMA's mission is clear. "We aim to champion best practices in manufacturing and inspire businesses to soar to greater heights," she said.

"While not every entrant and finalist may have their sights set on international markets, we are committed to fostering exploration of global opportunities and leveraging the strategic location and robust transportation infrastructure of the Hunter region.

"It is an honour to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of manufacturers from the Upper Hunter, Lower Hunter, Central Coast, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Port Stephens, and Mid-North Coast regions. The Hunter has been the host of some exciting media announcements for our industry in 2023 and there is no question the region is firmly positioned for ongoing support and success in manufacturing."

Ms Daley noted the commitment from the State Government to manufacture trains again in NSW. She said the Hunter is perfectly positioned to deliver. She also cited the international terminal expansion at Newcastle Airport, the clean-energy precinct planned for Port of Newcastle, and Australia's first lithium-ion battery giga-factory.

It was the 19th year of the HMA, and local television personality Jane Goldsmith steered the event flawlessly throughout the evening with 14 category awards up for grabs. Apart from those companies accepting awards, a feature was the students from Star Struck, who performed a medley from their production Ignite.

It was the 16th year of Downer Group as the major sponsor of the awards. Daniel Chaplin, Downer General Manager NSW, said the HMA is the region's most significant manufacturing event. Ms Daley said she was grateful for Downer's unequivocal support. She also thanked all the partners, in-kind sponsors, and supporters who play a crucial role in sustaining HMA.

"With the continuous support of our travel partner, Helloworld Business Travel Newcastle, and this year's addition, Newcastle Airport, we are thrilled to continue our tradition of awarding the two major winners with a trip to an international destination, enabling them to attend trade fairs, events, or activities that will benefit their companies," she said.

HMA is aware of the human resource and time cost of nominating for awards and once again, this year, there is an incentive prize for entering the 2023 HMA awards. Janus Electric was the lucky company drawn and won a trip for two people to a capital city of their choice in Australia.

Ms Daley said 2023 also marks a special year for Bekaert Australia, which has been in operation for 100 years in Newcastle, producing a range of specialised wire rope products.

"Congratulations to Stephen Hennessy and the whole team," she said. "Over the past century, the company has faced global economic challenges including the Depressions, a world war, and threats from international competition. And here you are."



HMA Chair Jacqui Daley



Jane Goldsmith

Photographs from the 2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards are supplied courtesy of Snapper studio

## FINALISTS

Congratulations to the following finalists of the 2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards. They are all winners in terms of being successful manufacturers and being significant contributors to the local and national economies.

AE Gibson & Sons	Australian Industrial Plastics
Bekaert Australia	Deeps Engineering
Downer Group	Elecbrakes
Emergent Group	GEM Switchboards
Hedweld	Herb Urban
Hey Zomi	HIVIS
Hunter Belle Dairy Co	Hydrogen at Home
Janus Electric	MITS Alloy
Molycop	No Thru
Out Of The Square Media	Resourceful Living
Robotic Systems	SafetyLink
SAPHI Engineering	Senquip
SM Electrical Manufacturing	Tomago Aluminium
Whiteley Corporation	

## SPONSORS & PARTNERS

Many thanks to the following sponsors and partners of the Hunter Manufacturing Awards. It is only through the support of these organisations that the Hunter Manufacturing Awards can be held and the success of local manufacturing can be highlighted and celebrated.

AGL	Ampcontrol Group
Ausure Insurance	BAE Systems
Biscit	Bridon-Bekaert
Business Hunter	Downer
Hedweld Group	Helloworld Travel Group

Hunter Business Review  
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Hunter MLA  
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McEwan and Partners  
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NSW Government  
TAFE NSW  
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HMA also acknowledges the following supporters who also actively assist regional manufacturing.

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Deeps Engineering	Design Anthology
Emergent Group	Infrabuild
Lead Ci	McEwan and Partners
Melville Equipment	
Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce	Scorpion International
Steber International	Tomago Aluminium
Varley Group	

***"We aim to champion best practices in manufacturing and inspire businesses to soar to greater heights"***

*Jacquie Daley - Chair HMA*



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# 2023 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS



## Manufacturer of the Year - 50 employees or more

Sponsor: Downer  
Winner: Hi-Vis Group

The Manufacturer of the Year - 50 employees or more was the **Hi-Vis Group**.

Hi-Vis is an Australian, family-owned and operated, Hunter-based company located in Carrington. They are market leaders in Highly Intelligent Visual Information Systems (HIVIS), whose products have been keeping Australians safe for over 40 years.

Since its establishment in 1960, Hi-Vis has grown to become one of Australia's largest manufacturers of road, safety and specialty custom signage and safety products.

Over time Hi-Vis has done the hard work to certify their quality, environment and WHS systems to ISO standard.

This disciplined approach to developing their business has been supported by significant investments in manufacturing technology, the development of new products, supported by a close relationship with the engineering department at the University of Newcastle, and a strong, positive culture for workers to thrive in.

The support for their workers is also reflected in their diverse connections to their community.

The Hi-Vis Group is yet another inspiring story of Hunter Manufacturing excellence.

*The Hi-Vis Group is yet another inspiring story of Hunter Manufacturing excellence.*

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**2023  
HUNTER  
MANUFACTURING  
AWARDS**



**Manufacturer of the Year - less  
than 50 employees**

**Sponsor: NSW Government**

**Winner: Senquip**

**Senquip** manufactures telemetry equipment that monitors and controls remote equipment in harsh industrial environments.

Their mission is to save customers time and money by allowing them to monitor remote systems and sensors locally through the internet.

These patented telemetry products that are highly adaptable, replacing the need for bespoke solutions. As well as selling across Australia, Senquip has sold into New Zealand, England, France, Spain, USA, India, Italy, Uruguay, South Africa, and Papua New Guinea, with significant potential for growth in each of these markets.

Senquip's disciplined and well-structured business systems has seen them achieve a range of ISO and other international certifications paving the way for significant export growth.

With key employees having an opportunity to become shareholders, a strong leadership culture and community connections and support, Senquip is great example of what the Hunter can do with the creation of world class intellectual property clever solutions to customers problems that cross the globe.

***Senquip's disciplined and well-structured business systems has seen them achieve a range of ISO and other international certifications paving the way for significant export growth.***

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***As proud supporters of the Hunter Manufacturing Awards,  
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all participants for 2023!***

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# 2023 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

## Apprentice of the Year

Sponsor: Ampcontrol Group

Winner: Adam Potter from Molycop



The judges said that **Adam Potter** has accomplished a lot in his career in short time at MolyCop and the teams around him appreciate his efforts. He has clearly applied all facets of his learning and with the application of his leadership certificate he has been acknowledged amongst his peers. Adam is a great example of an ambassador of the Vocation, Education and Training model and can articulate the true value received from his role at MolyCop and what the apprenticeship has meant to him.

## Excellence in Marketing

Sponsor: LIVMEDIA

Winner: Hey Zomi



**Hey Zomi's** marketing plan and campaign were exceptional, offering valuable insights and lessons for the future. They provided a comprehensive overview, outlining their vision, target audience, research, and execution strategy. Partnering with a PR agency, they're committed to normalising conversations about period wellbeing. The judges were impressed with Hey Zomi's clear purpose, including sales growth and brand recognition. They presented an approach focused on education, trust-building, and customer engagement. Their coverage of ROI was thorough, including advertising spend, revenue generation, and future.

## Excellence in Outstanding Start-Up

Sponsor: Molycop

Winner: Janus Electric



The **Janus Electric** heavy vehicle solution is a ground-breaking innovation that is focused on the current Australian national heavy vehicle fleet of 100,000 vehicles. All heavy vehicles require major engine rework at 1,000,000 km, which presents an ideal opportunity to convert existing fleets to electric power. The major engine rework cost is equivalent to the conversion to electric power. Janus' unique exchangeable "Change and Charge" battery technology, means a vehicle does not need to wait whilst recharging and provides flexibility battery exchange time and location. Supporting this ground-breaking innovation is their Ecosystem Software – which provides fleet owners with real time data. Janus Electric has converted a number of vehicles for large national clients and is seeing a growth with potential clients wishing to convert their vehicles.

## Excellence in Manufacturing Capability

Sponsor: KPMG

Winner: Hi-Vis Group



The manufacturing capability of **Hi-Vis** has grown significantly thanks to their investment into improving its focus areas of people and machinery, with changes to their organisational structure being a driving force behind recent success and a rapidly growing business. The judges commented that it was also a pleasure to see their supporting video which highlighted the changes Hi-Vis has made and the benefits to employees and the business.

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# 2023 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

## Excellence in Innovation

Sponsor: TAFE NSW

Winner: Saphi Engineering



Among a very strong field, **SAPHI** was a standout for this year's Excellence in Innovation Award. SAPHI have embedded a systematic approach to innovation management that embraces their business systems and processes, external collaborations and partnerships and end users. The company's commitment to innovation is documented in their strategic plan and demonstrates the use of best practice tools such as McKinsey's 3 Horizons Portfolio Management, Agile Scaling Up Framework and Data Driven insights. SAPHI's Five pillars of rapid iteration provides the team with a critical gateway assessment tool that focuses on the customer at all stages of commercialisation.

## Excellence in Product Design

Sponsor: Biscit

Winner: Senquip



This category celebrates outstanding achievements in product design, in what was a high-calibre field. Excellence in this field is when a product flawlessly combines multiple elements - from fulfilling essential product functions for the target market to providing intuitive usage, ensuring safety, and being perfectly suited for its operating environment. **Senquip's** QUAD is an extraordinary example that achieves this delicate balance of design details.



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# 2023 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

## Excellence in Export and Global Supply Chains

Sponsor: Hedweld Group

Winner: Bekaert Australia



**Bekaert Australia's** application presented a strong export picture. As the leading wire rope manufacturer in Australia, the company's global exports demonstrated a broad market reach and competitive edge in the global marketplace. The company's recent export achievements highlighted growth in South Africa sales along with significant ramped up production in Australia during a difficult time of transitioning production in North America. On the whole, the application portrayed an impressive international business operation.

## Rising Star

Sponsor: Whiteley Corporation

Joint winners: Liam Manning of Saphi Engineering and Curtis Gibson of AE Gibson & Sons



**Liam Manning's** leadership at SAPHI has been a catalyst for a 'can do' culture that drives the team to shoot for ever more ambitious goals. Liam has proven himself to be both a valued team member and inspirational team leader through his ability to show the way through his own actions and encourage the very best from those around him. Liam's visionary leadership has seen significant developments in the culture of the business, its safety systems and its passion for innovation. **Curtis Gibson** impressed with his ability to accept the stewardship of the family business from a long line of predecessors. Curtis readily took up the challenge, steering the business to the next level, introducing new business units and successfully growing them, migrating from paper-based operations to being digitally systemised, and despite accepting responsibility for some expensive mistakes, substantially growing the business in revenue and number of staff. Curtis also introduced robust safety systems and accomplished all of these things within a very short time frame.



# Bekaert

local manufacturer of quality  
**wire rope products**

Bekaert is a leading innovator and supplier of wire and synthetic rope products to mining, crane, industrial and commercial markets.

Australia's only rope manufacturer, supplying products and services to our valued customers for over 100 years.

Proud winner of the **Excellence in Export and Global Supply Chains Award**

# 2023 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

## Excellence in Sustainable Operations

Sponsor: Out of the Square Media

Winner: Hi-Vis Group



The judges said that the **Hi-Vis Group** has made significant investment into making their operations more sustainable and it is on track to continue benefiting both the company and environment. Strong qualitative data was supplied that assisted this application.

## Collaboration Partnership

Sponsor: BAE Systems

Winners: Resourceful Living and Hunter New England Health



This collaboration was well conceived between **Hunter New England Health** and **Resourceful Living**, in that it both acts as a pain reliever for one party and provides a gain for the other. Within a short space of time, Resourceful Living has already converted the efforts to significant sales, a rate that appears almost at parity with the rate that waste can be recovered as a resource for those sales. The model is repeatable, scalable and can be effective relatively quickly.

## Excellence in Workforce Capability

Sponsor: AGL

Winner: Hedweld



**Hedweld's** strategic initiative aimed to address the trades professional shortage by diversifying career opportunities and expanding the talent pool. They aligned their Workforce Capability Plan with their business strategy using the 70:20:10 model, dedicating 10% to leadership development. This involved collaborative efforts among management, team leaders, and workers to create targeted programs. Their focus on skill development and employee engagement was evident, with documented career paths and plans. Notably, they recruited from small rural towns, indicating a strong community connection. The Hedweld video showcased a friendly, family-like work environment. The benefits of this initiative included reduced unexplained leave, increased reporting of near misses and proactive WHS initiatives, reduced labour hours per job, documented career paths and development plans, increased engagement, active participation in key meetings, and more effective conversations between supervisors and their teams.

## Manufacturing Leader

Sponsor: Bekaert Australia

Winner: Craig de Leon of Elecbrakes



Over the past 2 years Craig has led **Elecbrakes** through significant business transformation with the implementation of new technology, manufacturing processes, automation and the relocation to a new site due to business growth which has resulted in a 7-fold increase in employee numbers. Craig's leadership style is based on respect and accountability. He has created a culture of loyalty, motivation and commitment which has contributed significantly to business success. The judges were impressed with Craig's leadership in creating a diverse workforce including increasing female participation and working closely with a disability support organisation to provide employment opportunities. Craig has a strong focus on his people and is now coaching and mentoring the next generation of manufacturing leaders.

# CONGRATULATIONS!

To all the winners and finalists of the  
2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards



MOGLYCOP

**ADAM POTTER**  
APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR



**CURTIS GIBSON**  
RISING STAR AWARD



**JANUS ELECTRIC**  
OUTSTANDING START UP AWARD



**LIAM MANNING**  
RISING STAR AWARD



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EXCELLENCE IN EXPORT AND GLOBAL SUPPLY



**RESOURCEFUL LIVING**  
COLLABORATION PARTNERSHIP AWARD



**SAPHI**  
EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION



**HUNTER NEW ENGLAND HEALTH**  
COLLABORATION PARTNERSHIP AWARD



**SENQUIP**  
EXCELLENCE IN PRODUCT DESIGN



**CRAIG DE LEON**  
MANUFACTURING LEADER

**MANUFACTURER  
OF THE YEAR**  
Less than 50 employees



**MANUFACTURER  
OF THE YEAR**  
50 employees or more



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**"SECURE DESTRUCTION - GUARANTEED"**

A husband and wife were having a fight. The wife decided to go for the silent treatment. The husband, realising he was in trouble, wrote on a piece of paper: "Wake me up at 6 am, I have a flight."

The next morning, he woke up at 9 am and missed his flight.

Furious, he saw a piece of paper on the bedside table: "Wake up, it's 6 am."

A man was trying to teach his young son the evils of alcohol. He put one worm in a glass of water and another worm in a glass of whiskey. The worm in the water lived, while the one in the whiskey curled up and died.

"All right, son," asked the father, "what does that show you?"

"Well, Dad, it shows that if you drink alcohol, you will not have worms."

A guy is driving around and he sees a sign in front of a house: "Talking Dog for Sale."

He rings the bell, and the owner tells him the dog is in the backyard. The guy goes into the backyard and sees a Labrador retriever.

"You talk?" he asks.

"Yep," the Lab replies.

"So, what's your story?"

The Lab looks up and says, "Well, I discovered that I could talk when I was pretty young, and I wanted to help the government; so I told ASIO about my gift, and in no time they had me jetting from country to country, sitting in rooms with spies and world leaders, because no one figured a dog would be eavesdropping. I was one of their most valuable spies eight years running. The jetting around really tired me out, and I knew I wasn't getting any younger, so I decided to settle down. I signed up for a job at the airport to do some undercover security work, mostly wandering

near suspicious characters and listening in. I uncovered some incredible dealings there and was awarded a batch of medals. I got married, had a mess of puppies, and now I'm just retired."

The guy is amazed. He goes back in and asks the owner what he wants for the dog.

"Ten dollars," the guy says.

"Ten dollars? This dog is amazing. Why on earth are you selling him so cheap?"

"Because he's a liar. He didn't do any of that stuff."

A man walks into a barber shop for a shave. The barber asks him to put a small wooden ball in his mouth so he can get a closer shave around his cheeks.

The man asks: "But what if I swallow it?"

The barber replies:

"No problem, sir. You just bring it back tomorrow like everyone else."

Gerard goes into a library and cheerfully says, "Hi! I'm here to see the doctor!"

The librarian, confused, quietly replies, "This is a library."

Gerard, realising his mistake, whispers, "Oh, sorry. I'm here to see the doctor."

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The great differentiator in business is when an organisation steps out and creates value from something never tried before."

- Kerry Baskins

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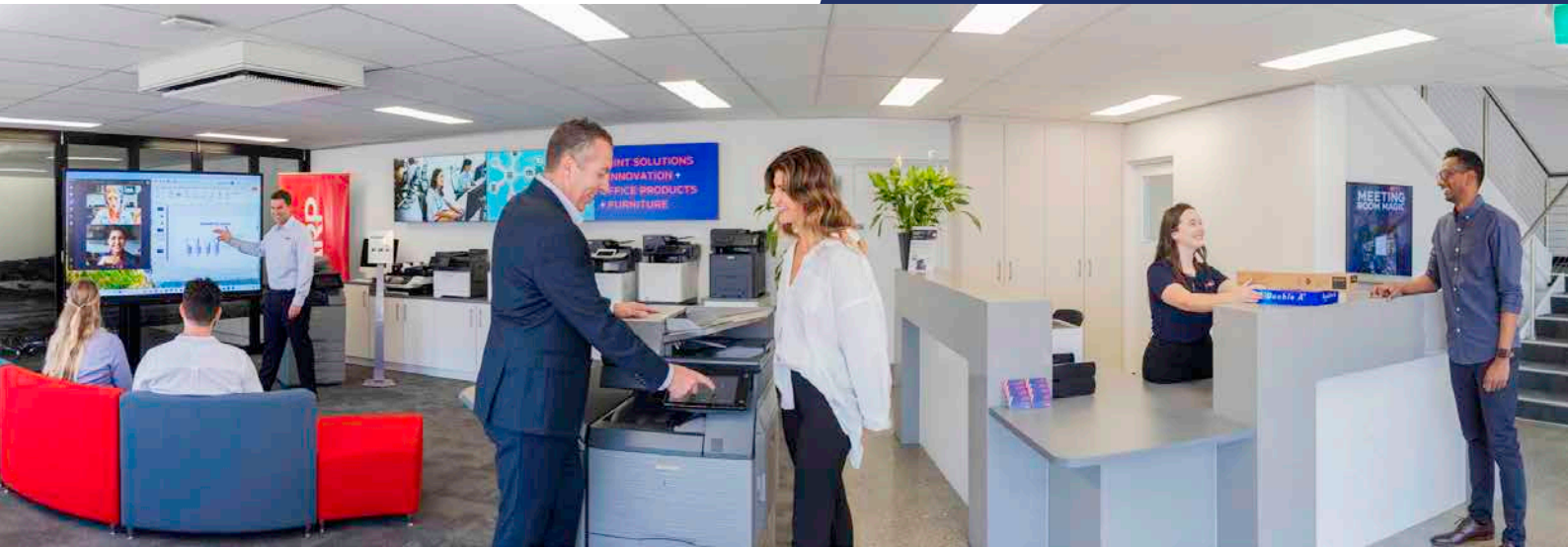
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