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42

years

From the Editor



The Federal Government's 2035 emissions target of 62-70% reduction on 2005 levels represents a huge challenge for Governments and industry.

With the Hunter's huge coal and energy industries, the region's economy will see more transition than most in Australia.

The Federal Government released the Australia's Net Zero Transformation: Treasury Modelling and Analysis report in September, which paints a difficult picture for fossil fuel exports, suggesting they will halve in the next 5 years.

This would not only be a huge challenge to The Hunter but the entire country.

Coal mining remains the backbone of the Hunter economy. The NSW Minerals Council estimated that for the 2023-24 financial year, it supported 16,600 jobs and directly injected \$8.8 billion into the local economy.

Fossil fuels are also a huge proportion of the nation's exports, being nearly 40% of total commodity exports.

Fossil fuels is also a major contributor to Government coffers, and any reduction will have major ramifications for already stretched budgets.

We will have to wait and see how accurate these forecasts are, and a number of industry representatives have expressed the opinion that they are overly pessimistic.

On the opportunity side there is an array of renewable energy projects in the Hunter, and across the nation, but these will have to be substantially increased for the nation to come anywhere near close to the 2035 target and to replace the power generation capacity of retiring power stations.

With the long lags in project approval and construction, there will need to be an array of new projects announced in the next few years.

Politically, of course, history suggests it is unlikely the Labor Party will be in power for the whole of the next ten years, so it will be interesting to hear more details of the Coalition's plans.

On such an important issue for the nation, it is hoped that emissions targets and transition to renewables will not continue to be a major political football and that some common ground will be found to create more certainty for investors of new long-term projects.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

ON THIS MONTH'S COVER

The Whiteley Human Therapeutics Plant in Tomago, one of the projects that contributed to Kingston Building taking out the Commercial Building of the Year and five other awards at the 2025 Newcastle Excellence in Building Awards held on 4 September.

For more information see page 18.



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Bridges allow project vehicles to bypass Singleton CBD

Two new bridges built for the Singleton bypass are already delivering a benefit to the community by providing an alternate route for large haulage trucks working on the project, helping minimise heavy vehicle movements through the town centre.

The \$700 million Singleton bypass is being funded thanks to a \$560 million investment from the Australian Government and \$140 million from the NSW Government.

Bridges installed across the Hunter River and the New England Highway at Gowrie in recent months have now had guardrails added.

Transport for NSW Executive Director Partnerships and Integration North Greg Collins said that has allowed heavy vehicles to use the alignment.

"The section of the New England Highway through Singleton carries around 26,000 vehicles, including more than 3700 heavy vehicles, each day and construction of the bypass has only added to that," Mr Collins said.

"Having these two newly constructed bridges open for use by haulage trucks minimises further disruptions to the community and town centre as work continues.

"Trucks moving fill from earthworks at the northern end of the project can now travel through the project alignment to Putty Road, removing around 250 trucks per day from the town centre.

"With traffic volumes predicted to rise over the coming years, the bypass will make a massive difference to safety and amenity in Singleton, benefitting residents, visitors and local businesses."

This off-road haulage allows larger trucks to be used during construction which means the project can be completed more



efficiently, as well as minimising truck movements through the town centre.

Overall, the Singleton bypass is about 8 km long and will save motorists about six minutes in travel time, avoiding up to five sets of traffic lights. The bypass will remove about 15,000 vehicles a day from the section of the New England Highway through the Singleton town centre, improving safety and easing congestion on one of the Hunter's most notorious bottlenecks. The bypass also includes a full interchange at Putty Road, and connections with the New England Highway at the southern end, the northern end and at Gowrie.

The Singleton Bypass is expected to open to traffic in late 2026, weather permitting.

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Newcastle Startup selected for prestigious Tech & Innovation Showcase

Newcastle entrepreneur Nook O'Dea has achieved a significant milestone, with her innovative end-of-life planning platform Adios selected for the prestigious SXSW Sydney Tech & Innovation Showcase. The selection positions the Newcastle-developed platform alongside Australia's most cutting-edge technological innovations at the internationally renowned event running October 13-19, 2025.

SXSW Sydney's Tech & Innovation Showcase features applications from innovative ideas across Australia, with places awarded exclusively to those demonstrating technical applications in new fields. Adios' selection validates the platform's groundbreaking approach to transforming end-of-life planning through digital innovation.

"I'm incredibly excited to be at such an amazing event – I've wanted to experience SXSW since I was in my twenties, and having the chance to do so here in Sydney feels incredibly special," explains O'Dea.

"The great opportunity at SXSW is that this is where you find early adopters, the people willing to try things first and then provide invaluable feedback"

Adios represents a success story for Newcastle's thriving startup ecosystem. O'Dea developed the platform through the University of Newcastle's I2N Accelerator program, leveraging the incredible support from the university and local business networks that have helped establish the Hunter Valley as a genuine innovation hub.

The platform addresses a critical gap in Australian society: only 48% of Australians have a will, while only 14% have an end of life plan. Adios transforms this traditionally difficult conversation

through comprehensive digital tools covering financial, legal, health, personal, and memorial planning – all designed specifically for Australian families.

What sets Adios apart is its holistic approach to end-of-life planning that removes the fear and avoidance typically associated with death conversations.

At SXSW Sydney, attendees will have the opportunity to experience live demonstrations of the Adios platform and begin the process of "leaving things in the best way possible for the people they care about." The interactive showcase will highlight how digital innovation can transform traditionally challenging life administration into an accessible, organised process.

Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone project secures planning approval

The NSW Government is fast tracking the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone that upgrades existing grid infrastructure such as distribution poles and wires. This approach will reduce the impact on communities and the environment.

The network upgrades, which will enable 1 GW of network transfer capacity, include upgrades to existing distribution lines and the construction of two new substations. Full planning approval was achieved following the exhibition of the Review of Environmental Factors and a review of submissions by councils, state authorities, businesses and individuals.

The Hunter-Central Coast REZ network infrastructure has been assessed as having a relatively low environmental impact, as most of the works are taking place on existing easements.

Ausgrid has committed to addressing the Review of Environmental Factors feedback, which included priorities such as jobs, support for local businesses and procurement, protection of visual amenity and environment, community benefits, effective traffic management and ongoing community engagement.

The REZ is forecast to create an average of approximately 590 direct jobs per year in the local area during construction, including roles for engineers, electricians and labourers.

The project is now subject to final approvals from the Australian Energy Regulator.

\$1 million available via the Newcastle Port Community Contributions Fund

The NSW Government has announced applications are open for the Newcastle Port Community Contributions Fund with \$1 million available to support local groups or businesses to undertake projects to boost activation, heritage or tourism.

The Fund provides grants of between \$10,000 and \$250,000 for projects that benefit the environment, public domain, infrastructure, heritage restoration, activation, smart technology, events or community.

Applications for Newcastle Port Community Contribution Fund Round 9 will open at 12 midday on Tuesday 7 October and close on Monday 1 December 2025.

The Fund sets out to deliver high-quality projects that:

- foster stronger community bonds
- enhance accessibility
- boost visitation
- increase participation in cultural and artistic life and enhance public, environmental and business infrastructure which can be achieved through efficient program design.

Program guidelines and eligibility criteria are available from 7 October at nsw.gov.au/npcfcf



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Cutcher & Neale Audit Division joins HLB Mann Judd network

The Audit and Assurance division of Cutcher & Neale has formally joined forces with one of Australasia's leading advisory and accounting networks, HLB Mann Judd.

The move will bolster HLB Mann Judd locations to 13 across Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. HLB Mann Judd is also a member of HLB International - a global advisory and accounting network comprising of 1,139 offices across 155 countries.

Cutcher & Neale was established in the Hunter region in 1953. Over its more than 70 years of operation, the firm has developed a reputation for combining traditional values with innovative, specialist services in finance, audit and assurance, tax, business advisory, financial planning and wealth management, superannuation, forensic accounting, and sector specialised work in medical, dental, clubs and hospitality, and the not-for-profit sector.

Cutcher & Neale's former Partners Mark O'Connor and Nick Nancarrow, who lead the HLB Mann Judd Newcastle team, said the rebrand reflects the natural evolution of a partnership that has existed for many years.

"This step cements our role within the HLB network and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to growth and innovation," said Mr O'Connor.

"The team remains the same, but our reach and resources are now significantly greater. By becoming HLB Mann Judd Newcastle, we are reinforcing our commitment to clients, while unlocking broader expertise across governance, sustainability, and complex audit requirements."

Mr Nancarrow added that the decision to transition reflects a natural evolution, aligning the team's established local presence



The Newcastle executive team

with HLB Mann Judd's national reputation. "We've built strong foundations in the Hunter, particularly supporting registered clubs, not-for profit organisations, community service providers and private businesses. Becoming HLB Mann Judd Newcastle gives us the strength of a national and international brand, while maintaining our local focus," said Mr Nancarrow.

HLB Mann Judd is among the most awarded in the industry. In 2025, HLB Mann Judd was named Best Accounting & Consulting Services Firm (\$100–200 million revenue) at the prestigious Client Choice Awards and was a finalist in the categories of Most Trusted Firm: Accounting & Consulting Services (>\$30 million revenue), and Most Innovative Accounting & Consulting Services Firm (\$50 - \$500 million revenue).

The HLB global network has also been recognised internationally, winning ESG/Sustainability Initiative of the Year at the 2025 International Accounting Forum Awards.

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2025 BUSINESS HUNTER AWARDS

For more than 40 years, the Awards have been a fixture of the regional business calendar, standing as the Hunter's largest and most prestigious business awards program. The Hunter Awards are designed exclusively to promote excellence and achievement among the region's leading businesses, while supporting the activities of Business Hunter as the voice and advocate for business in the Hunter.

With more than 220 applications submitted, with an impressive field of finalists, representing over 100 unique businesses, the 2025 Awards were the most competitive and inspiring in the program's history. Each of the winners demonstrated outstanding achievement, resilience, and leadership in their field, with their success reflecting the strength and ambition that define the Hunter business community.

• **Business of the Year, sponsored by IMB Bank - Newcastle Airport.** Newcastle Airport is driving growth and connectivity across the Hunter region, with a strong focus on expanding routes, enhancing passenger experience, and supporting regional economic development.

• **President's Award, sponsored by Orica – Whiteley.** Whiteley is a medical manufacturer specialising in cleaning and infection control products. Established in 1933, it has grown to become a national leader in its field.

• **Outstanding Business Leader +21 employees, sponsored by the University of Newcastle - Jeremy Brett, Morgan Engineering.** Jeremy Brett is the General Manager of Morgan Engineering, where he leads a team of more than 130 people and oversees operations, safety, people and culture, and financial performance.

• **Outstanding Business Leader < 20 employees, sponsored by Tulloch Wines - James Sneddon, Hyphen Health.** James leads strategy, product development, partnerships, and culture. He has driven innovations such as Australia's first online sexual health testing platform, harm reduction services for steroid and hormone users, and tailored care for LGBTQIA+ communities.

• **President's Honour Roll - Mullane, Monteath & Powys and Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service.** In 2025, three organisations were inducted into the Honour Roll:

Mullane Group – Celebrating 100 years in business, Mullane has grown into one of the largest specialist trades contractors in NSW, employing more than 250 staff.

Monteath & Powys – Established in 1950, Monteath & Powys now employs a team of 70 professionals across surveying, planning, project management, spatial services, and related disciplines.

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An extraordinary history-making team effort ✨

Being inducted into the Hunter Business Hall of Fame is more than a milestone for **Out of the Square (OOTS)**. It's a reminder of why we do what we do, and who we do it for.

The honour follows our three wins in the Contribution to the Region category in 2019, 2022 and 2024. The first time in the 42 years of the awards any organisation has done so. Needless to say we were deeply moved and honoured. Each recognition acknowledged the relationships we've built, the collaborations we have shared, and the ways through creativity and passion we've been able to contribute to the region we call home.

And while our name may appear on the plaque, the recognition belongs just as much to the people and businesses we've had the privilege of working alongside. Every client who has trusted us with their brand, every partner who has joined us on a project, every community initiative we've been able to support – they've all contributed to this historic recognition.

Newcastle and the Hunter have always been at the heart of **OOTS**. Since opening our doors 28 years ago, our purpose has been simple: to help local businesses, organisations and communities tell their stories in powerful, creative ways. As a creative and production agency, our work spans strategy, branding, campaigns, design, video production and digital experiences – but for us, it has never been about the list of services. It has always been about impact; giving businesses and communities the tools to thrive.

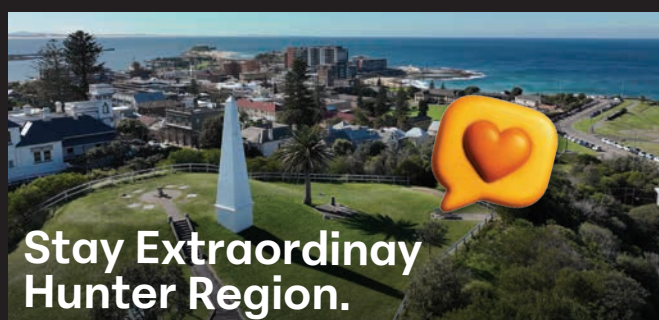
That impact is also shown through our diverse self-funded 'Passion Project' work. Be that our 'Region Ready' campaign that showcases and celebrates the assets of the region free for all to use, or the light-hearted celebration of the Queens Wharf Tower coming down immortalised in a bottle open keepsake raising over \$22,000 for Hunter Prostate Cancer research. The common thread has been the same: using creativity to strengthen the region, elevate local voices, support those in need and amplify the Hunter's story far beyond its borders.

At **OOTS**, we often say we're in the business of creating the Extraordinary. But Extraordinary doesn't mean flashy or unattainable. It means doing work that matters. It's the small business owner who dares to try something new. It's the community organisation that needs a hand to push for greater impact. It's the clients who invite us into their journey and trust us to bring their vision to life. And it's the collective momentum of a region that continues to grow, diversify and make its mark on the national stage.

Winning Contribution to the Region in 2019 was humbling. Backing it up again in 2022 showed that consistency matters. A third win in 2024 proved that long-term investment in the community pays off. One of the well wishes we received said "You can't buy an award like this. It can only be earned through years of authentic, dedicated work to propel the city forward."

Joining the Hall of Fame gives us the chance to pause, reflect, and most importantly, to say thank you. Thank you to the clients who fuel our creativity. Thank you to the partners who share our drive. Thank you to our team, whose passion brings every idea to life. And thank you to the Hunter – a region that inspires us every day to keep striving, keep giving and keep building something Extraordinary.

Our focus now is firmly on the road ahead. The Hunter is evolving, and we're excited to play our part in shaping what comes next. Extraordinary isn't a destination. It's an ongoing pursuit. And it's one we'll keep chasing together.



**Stay Extraordinary
Hunter Region.**



Celebrating Extraordinary

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**Contribution to the Region
– HALL OF FAME –**

2019 2022 2024

We are deeply grateful to be inducted into the Business Hunter Hall of Fame as a result of winning the Contribution to the Region category three times, the first organisation in the prestigious awards history to do so. Thank you especially to our clients – you make giving back possible. Every brief, every project, every partnership is proof that Extraordinary is built together.

OUT OF THE SQUARE

Brand Campaign Content Digital

Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service – The Service began in 1975 as a largely volunteer outfit and has since grown into a professional, lifesaving operation that goes far beyond its mission.

• **Kristen Keegan Young Business Leader, sponsored by Quarry Mining - Steph Loadsman, KPMG.** Steph Loadsman is the Lead Partner of KPMG Newcastle, overseeing the office's strategy, governance, and growth while maintaining a strong client-facing role in business and tax advisory.

• **Outstanding Employee, sponsored by Apprenticeship Support Australia - Matthew Borger, Newcastle Airport.** Matt Borger is the Airlines and Partnerships Manager at Newcastle Airport, where he leads new route development, manages relationships with more than 100 airline and industry partners, and drives the airport's broader aviation growth strategy.

• **Contribution to the Region, sponsored by Whiteley - Newcastle Airport.** Serving 1.2 million passengers a year, the airport is a key driver of Australia's largest regional economy, contributing over \$1.1 billion annually, including \$300 million to the visitor economy.

• **Contribution to the Region - Hall of Fame, sponsored by Whiteley - Out of the Square Media.** Out of the Square Media (OOTS) is the Hunter Region's 'Goldilocks' Creative Agency. Big enough to deliver, small enough to care. Celebrating 28 years in business, their day job is delivering marketing solutions for organisations large and small. They also exist to 'Defy Expectations' and go beyond what is asked. As passionate advocates for the region they give back through their many self-funded passion projects.

• **Outstanding Visitor Experience, sponsored by McDonald Jones Stadium - 4WD Tours R Us.** 4WD Tours R Us is a premier adventure tourism operator based in Port Stephens, offering unforgettable off-road experiences across the region's iconic Stockton Sand Dunes.

• **Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion, sponsored by The Mai-Wel Group - Splash of Colour Swimming.** Splash of Colour Swimming is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to transforming water safety and inclusion for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) adults.

• **Employer of Choice +21 employees, sponsored by Strike Force Services - The PHN.** The PHN is a not-for-profit organisation with a vision for Healthy People and Healthy Communities. They work with primary health care providers to commission programs and services designed to improve the efficiency and quality of primary health care and create a positive impact for communities.

• **Employer of Choice <20 employees, sponsored by The University of Newcastle - Loyalty Management Solutions.** Loyalty Management Solutions is a Hunter-based consultancy, delivering advisory, planning, and project management services across the construction and property sectors.

• **Excellence in Sustainability, sponsored by PwC Australia - Newcastle Airport.** Newcastle Airport's \$250 million terminal and precinct expansion is unlocking global access, freight capacity and tourism growth. The project will create 4,410 ongoing jobs and deliver \$12.7 billion in long-term economic impact. Newcastle Airport is the first to achieve Level 4+ Carbon Accreditation.

• **Excellence in Innovation, sponsored by the Port Authority of New South Wales - Shellshock AI – SAPHI.** Shellshock is an industrial safety innovation developed by SAPHI in Newcastle, designed to prevent workplace incidents before they occur.

• **Outstanding New Business, sponsored by AGL - Showtime Kayaking.** Showtime Kayaking is Australia's leading night kayak adventure company, delivering unforgettable experiences that blend exploration, excitement, and environmental responsibility.

• **Excellence in International Business, sponsored by Port of Newcastle - Omnia Wheel.** OMNIA Wheel is redefining mobility through its world-leading omni wheel technology. Designed for multi-directional movement without swivel, OMNIA wheels power smarter, safer solutions.

• **Outstanding Community Organisation, sponsored by BHP - Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation.** Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation is a 100% locally funded not-for-profit, providing practical, essential services to Hunter residents navigating a breast cancer diagnosis.

• **Excellence in Large Business, sponsored by the NSW Minerals Council - Prosperity Advisers Group.** Founded in Newcastle, Prosperity Advisers has grown along Australia's east coast to become an award-winning advisory firm known for excellence and innovation.

• **Excellence in Small Business, proudly sponsored by the Newcastle Herald – SAPHI.** Driven by a single belief - that no one should die on the job - SAPHI develops AI-sensing technology to protect operators in harsh environments such as mines, manufacturing facilities, and remote roads.

• **Excellence in Micro Business, proudly sponsored by Glencore - Note It.** Note It is a mobile-first platform that helps frontline leaders capture, track, and act on workplace conversations—whether about performance, safety, wellbeing, or development.

• **Outstanding Local Chamber, sponsored by Business NSW - Maitland Business Chamber.** The Maitland Business Chamber is a not-for-profit, member-driven organisation representing nearly 200 local businesses and organisations.

• **Outstanding Local Chamber, Hall of Fame, sponsored by Business NSW - Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce.** The Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been established for over 30 years and has gained a reputation for being one of the most pro-active Chambers in the region.

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*[National Listener Survey - conducted by McNair Yellow Squares - Greater Newcastle 2025 Survey Wave 1].

Clean Energy Precinct Recycled Water Supply Project

The Clean Energy Precinct Recycled Water Supply Project, developed by coNEXA, in partnership with the Port of Newcastle, has reached a major milestone with the submission of the State Significant Infrastructure Scoping Report, marking the commencement of the planning approval process.

The Project will expand the Kooragang Industrial Water Scheme (KIWS) to supply an additional 22.6 ML/day of recycled wastewater to the Clean Energy Precinct. This will be achieved through the modification of Hunter Water Corporation's Edgeworth and Toronto wastewater treatment plants to enable diversion of effluent, construction of a ~17 km effluent supply pipeline, bulk storage facility, break pressure tank, expanded recycled water treatment facilities and a trade waste discharge pipeline.

The project provides a secure and sustainable source of water for large scale clean energy production, providing a competitive advantage over other proposed hydrogen hubs in Australia and globally.

"We are proud to lead this critical project that will underpin the water needs of the Clean Energy Precinct" said Kurt Dahl, CEO of coNEXA.

"By utilising a treated effluent resource, that would otherwise be discharged to the ocean, we're reducing the demand on potable water resources, while enabling large-scale clean energy production, promoting long-term water security, environmental sustainability and fostering a circular economy. This is a powerful example of how sustainable water infrastructure can drive regional transformation."

Hunter Water is supporting the Port of Newcastle's Clean Energy Precinct by facilitating access to sustainable water infrastructure that supports new industries while protecting drinking water supplies.

"Water is essential to green hydrogen production. By facilitating the use of recycled water for this new industrial use, we're helping to preserve our region's precious drinking water resources, while enabling the growth of a clean energy economy in the Hunter," said Hunter Water Managing Director, Darren Cleary.

"Hunter Water is committed to working with industry and our partners to deliver fit-for-purpose water solutions that support innovation, sustainability and regional economic development. The Clean Energy Precinct demonstrates how strategic infrastructure investments can unlock long-term environmental and economic benefits for our region, without compromising water security."

The Clean Energy Precinct Water Supply Project is a cornerstone of the Port of Newcastle's vision to become a leading clean energy hub, delivering long-term environmental, economic and social benefits to the region.

Regional Development Australia Hunter announces new board

Following endorsement by the Minister for Regional Development, the Hon. Kristy McBain MP, Ian Pedersen, Chair of Regional Development Australia (RDA) Hunter, has announced the appointment of the organisation's new Deputy Chair, Mr Geoff Lilliss.

Mr Lilliss has had an extensive career in energy utilities, manufacturing, engineering management and higher education. His career spans national and international business at the most senior levels of the electrical power industry and manufacturing. Mr Lilliss is a long-serving member of RDA Hunter's Board, contributing his expertise since 2009.

He has been appointed to the role of Deputy Chair for a three-year term.

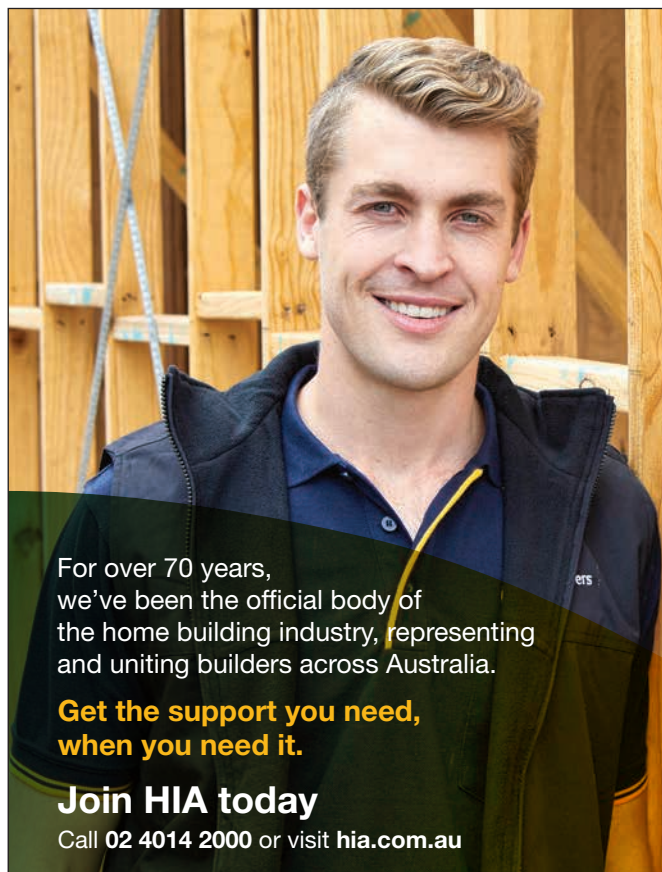
Mr Pedersen has also announced his six new Board members:

- **Mr Darren Bayley** – Principal & Director of Education, Tocal College, NSW Department of Primary Industries (re-appointed)
- **Ms Kylie Frearson** – Director of Property Solutions 101 (continuing)
- **Ms Kate Jensen** – Faculty General Manager, University of Sydney (new)
- **Mr Darran Leyden** – Managing Director of Whiteley Corporation (continuing)
- **Mr Paul Reynolds** – CEO of Advitech, Fellow of Engineers Australia (continuing)
- **Ms Louise Rose** – Partner at KPMG (new)

"I'm delighted to be working with Geoff to lead this exceptional group of regional representatives as we enter RDA Hunter's next phase, Mr Pedersen said.

"The combined industry knowledge and business experience of our returning and new directors positions RDA Hunter as a strong contributor as the region works towards a resilient and prosperous future. We are committed to working collaboratively to drive meaningful outcomes for our region in three key areas: economic sustainability, workforce skills, and gathering regional intelligence.

"Our focus will be on collecting and synthesising regional data to inform decision-making, increasing awareness of the region's strengths, enhancing economic infrastructure, and supporting industry and innovation growth. At the same time, we will continue to prioritise the development of a skilled, homegrown workforce to ensure a strong, sustainable future for our communities and businesses."



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Councils launch innovative solar and battery program

Making the switch to renewable energy at home will become easier and more affordable for Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Maitland residents following the launch of a new council-led program.

The Solar Neighbourhoods initiative is designed to remove barriers that have held back solar and home battery uptake in the region.

Deputy Lord Mayor Callum Pull said the councils were leading the way on sustainability with the introduction of this collaborative program, which is the first of its kind in the region and responds to community feedback.

"We've heard from residents across the three council areas that they want solar and batteries for their homes, but are overwhelmed by the choice, upfront cost and complexity of buying solar systems," Cr Pull said.

"Through an extensive tender and due diligence process we've identified a range of high-quality systems, delivered by our program partner and local installers.

"Households installing a new solar and battery system could save up to 90% of a typical family electricity bill, which is why we're committed to providing an easy, accessible pathway to solar and home batteries for our community.

"This program also aligns with a key priority in our Newcastle Environment Strategy, which is to support the transition of the Newcastle LGA to net zero emissions through an accelerated uptake of onsite solar and batteries."

Residents across the three council areas will be able to access quality solar, batteries and electric vehicle chargers from program partner 1KOMMA5 Australia and their network of local installers. Upfront payments or affordable options to pay the system off over time will be available, as well as an exclusive program discount and government rebates.

From L-R, City of Newcastle Deputy Lord Mayor Callum Pull, Maitland Councillor Warrick Penfold and Lake Macquarie Deputy Mayor Jack Antcliff celebrate the upcoming launch of the Solar Neighbourhoods program later this month.



WORKPLACE WELLBEING, PROTECTING YOUR PEOPLE, STRENGTHENING YOUR BUSINESS

Businesses today are navigating rising expectations to manage psychosocial hazards, comply with new workplace safety standards, and protect employee wellbeing. But supporting mental health is about more than compliance - it's a driver of productivity, retention, and long-term success.

For the past 15 years, Hunterlink has delivered confidential, 24/7 counselling and wellbeing support for more than 100,000 employees and their families across Australia and internationally. As a national and global EAP provider, we understand the diverse challenges facing today's workforce and we understand that mental health support must be proactive, practical, and accessible.

What we deliver:

- 24/7 confidential counselling via phone, video, email and WhatsApp.
- Outplacement and redundancy support to guide employees through change with confidence.
- Mental Health First Aid and wellbeing training to build resilience in teams.
- Critical incident onsite support when workplaces need immediate care.
- Specialist management and organisational consultancy to address psychosocial risks.

Working across industries from maritime and mining to retail, hospitality, and community services. Our not-for-profit status means our focus is where it matters most — protecting

your people and strengthening your workplace.

"My counsellor has been by my side through some of the most difficult times in my life. They initially supported me through couples counselling, and later through individual counselling when circumstances at home changed. Throughout it all, they have consistently shown compassion, understanding, and professionalism." (individual client)

Leaders turn to Hunterlink when workplace wellbeing can't be left to chance - because together, we create safer, healthier workplaces

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International airport officially opened

Newcastle Airport officially opened its new international terminal on 25 September in a milestone moment featuring a spectacular RAAF flyby and a proud celebration of Hunter culture. Around 300 guests including dignitaries, industry leaders and community representatives gathered to celebrate the expanded terminal which opens the Hunter to the world, enhances international connectivity and stands as a symbol of the region's growth, ambition and capability.

Proceedings, hosted by Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes, included addresses from Minister for Defence Industry and Federal Member for Shortland The Hon. Pat Conroy MP, Minister for the Hunter The Hon. Yasmin Catley MP, Federal Member for Paterson Meryl Swanson MP, Port Stephens Mayor Leah Anderson and Deputy Lord Mayor of Newcastle City Council Callum Pull. Formalities concluded with the unveiling of a commemorative artwork by local artist, Mitch Revs.

Newcastle Airport CEO Linc Horton said the terminal's footprint has now been expanded by 50%, opening the Hunter Region to the world and making international travel from Newcastle easier and more accessible.

"We commenced direct flights to Perth earlier this month, have direct flights to Bali commencing on the 21st of October and are working on more exciting routes for our region," Mr Horton said.

"Our region's new international terminal is a legacy asset built today for the decades to come; for our shareholder councils, Port Stephens and City of Newcastle, for our communities, for the

State of New South Wales and for the Federal Government whose investment in us is an investment in our region's future.

"This terminal is a physical representation of our commitment to delivering the airport our region deserves connecting the people of the Hunter to the world and creating new pathways for trade, tourism and economic development."

The completed terminal will deliver \$12.7 billion in economic benefit over the next 20 years, including \$6.2 billion into the visitor economy, \$6.5 billion in freight activity and more than 4,000 jobs.

A key sustainability milestone was becoming the first airport in Australia to achieve Airport Carbon Accreditation (ACA) Level 4+, placing Newcastle Airport in the top 12% of airports worldwide for carbon management. The airport also reached Net Zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions in 2024, six years ahead of target, through a 100% renewable energy supply, certified carbon offsets, EV and solar investment and achieving a 5-Star Green Star 'Designed' assessment rating for the new terminal.

The new terminal expands the facility to eight gates, introduces an aerobridge for the first time and more than doubles the airport's passenger capacity during peak periods. It has been designed to accommodate larger international aircraft, opening the way for future services to major global hubs.

Newcastle Airport currently serves around 1.3 million passengers each year. By 2036, this is forecast to grow to 2.6 million annually, with the capacity to ultimately support around 5 million passengers per year.

Draft plans revealed for new sporting precinct

City of Newcastle will transform an undeveloped 5 ha site in Maryland into the first new district level sports facility in more than two decades to be delivered from the ground up.

Concept plans have been unveiled for the Creek Road sporting precinct, which could include up to four new multi-use fields, a dual-facing grandstand with changerooms, public amenities and a car park.

Enclosed cricket practice nets, spectator seating, shared paths and fitness stations are also proposed in the staged draft masterplan.

The 5 ha parcel sits at the south-western corner of a larger 30 ha site at Creek Road, which contains a mix of natural areas including wetlands.

The project is likely to be delivered in stages during the next five to 10 years, with the support of government funding and external partnerships.

The public exhibition will help inform considerations around what sports and supporting amenities might be accommodated within the site, to determine a final layout before detailed designs are undertaken.

The allocation of grounds to specific sporting clubs will form a separate process during a later stage of the development.

City of Newcastle classifies all reserves used for sport as either Regional, District or Local, based on their size, level of facilities and usage profiles. District level facilities are well-developed spaces of substantial size that offer a broad range of quality recreation opportunities. They attract visitors from across a number of suburbs.

Newcastle currently has 10 district level sports facilities, including Adamstown No.1, Darling St Oval and Passmore Oval.

Renders of concept option for the Creek Road sporting precinct. The public exhibition will help inform considerations around what sports and supporting amenities might be accommodated within the site, to determine a final layout before detailed designs are undertaken.



SCORPION INTERNATIONAL IN NEWCASTLE (A DIVISION OF POWERHOUSE LOGISTICS) : MOVING AUSTRALIAN EXPORTS FASTER, SMARTER AND WITH CONFIDENCE!

Exporting from Australia is full of opportunity—but it's also complex. Deadlines are tight, markets move fast and every shipment carries high stakes. That's why Australian businesses turn to **SCORPION International** (a division of POWERHOUSE Logistics): to navigate the challenges, streamline the journey and get products to market faster, safer, and smarter.

SCORPION International is a 100% Australian-owned supply chain management company. Fully accredited Freight Forwarder and Trusted Trader complete with inhouse licensed Customs Brokers. We partner with exporters across all industries to deliver end-to-end multimodal solutions, whether by air, sea, road, or rail. Our clients rely on us not just to move freight, but to open doors to global markets. **SCORPION International** provides a full spectrum of export services designed to help businesses reach international markets efficiently, reliably and with complete confidence. Our services cover every step of the journey, whether you're moving a single shipment or managing complex project logistics.

- **Air Freight:** For time-sensitive and high-value shipments. Our air freight services provide speed, reliability, and total visibility. We manage bookings, documentation, customs clearance and delivery to ensure goods reach their destinations on time.
- **Sea Freight:** From FCL and LCL to bulk and project cargo. Our sea freight services deliver cost-effective, scalable solutions. We coordinate with carriers, ports and customs authorities to provide smooth end-to-end management for international shipping.
- **Road and Rail:** To connect the journey, **SCORPION International** ensures cargo moves seamlessly from origin to port, airport, or final destination. Our domestic road and rail services integrate with air and sea freight, providing true door-to-door logistics.
- **Customs Clearance & Compliance:** Export rules are complex, but our expertise makes them manageable. We take care of export documentation, declarations and compliance to keep goods moving without delays or penalties.
- **Project Cargo & Oversized Shipments:** From machinery and infrastructure components to defence and aerospace equipment, we create tailored solutions that move oversized or high-value cargo safely and efficiently.
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- **Sector Expertise:** We work across mining, infrastructure, defence, aerospace, medical pharma, all commercial exports, even live animals. Each sector comes with unique demands and our team delivers customised solutions that meet deadlines, compliance requirements and quality standards.
- **Technology & Visibility:** Transparency is key. Our investment in digital tools gives clients real-time tracking, clear communication and actionable insights—putting control back in their hands.
- **Consultation & Planning:** Export success starts with strategy. We collaborate closely with clients to assess requirements, plan routes and identify opportunities to optimise speed, cost and efficiency.

At the heart of it all are "our people". Clients tell us they value the relationships we build as much as the services we provide. Logistics is a people-driven business and our team cares deeply about every outcome. Together with innovative systems and trusted global partnerships ... that's what makes **SCORPION International** a partner exporters can count on.

In a world where supply chains are increasingly complex, one thing stays the same: exporters need someone who understands their challenges and shares their goals. **SCORPION International** is proud to be that partner—helping Australian businesses move quicker, smarter and with confidence into the markets they've worked so hard to reach.

BECAUSE WHEN OUR CLIENTS SUCCEED - SO DO WE!



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EXPORTING WITH CONFIDENCE: HOW TRADE CREDIT INSURANCE CAN SAFEGUARD YOUR INTERNATIONAL SALES

Graham Crozier
Nova Credit Risk

Insolvency statistics are increasing globally after years of relatively benign business failure numbers.

Recent history has reminded us again that the world is a volatile place and that change happens very quickly.

We've seen supply chain stresses, tariff impositions and increases, strains to long-term and established international relationships and wars in various parts of the world.

Against this background businesses continue to trade globally but the risks are higher than ever.

Whether you're an experienced export-focused business or just taking the first steps on that journey, one resource stands out as under-utilised but with the potential to be an absolute life-saver; Export Trade Credit Insurance.

In fact the very origins of Trade Credit Insurance, dating back centuries, are founded on covering the risks and exposures presented by export-based transactions.

In 2025, international trade is far more sophisticated, and the availability of tools for protection have improved significantly, but the risks have also grown.

As an exporter, the non-payment risks come from multiple potential sources:

- Non-Payment Risk (customer failure via liquidation, receivership, administration or the local equivalents)
- Non acceptance of goods/contract repudiation (leading to re-sale loss and demurrage costs)
- Political Risks (wars, political violence/sabotage, embargoes, cancellation of import/export licenses, currency inconvertibility)

And of course, if payment is not made and collection activities need to be commenced, navigating a successful path can be daunting, unclear, time-consuming and ineffective unless you have access to right resources.

Some of the key benefits of insuring export receivables include:

- Business growth; third party assessments of the credit risks help to focus on dealing with creditworthy customers and being alerted when there is a deterioration in risk quality and payment performance
- Profit protection; by providing cash-flow certainty, normally a 90% return when a claim occurs, profit forecasts are not derailed
- Prospecting the "right" new customers; by using the insurers' intelligence networks and experienced risk underwriting teams strategically located around the world, this helps to guide you in focusing on good paymasters and avoiding the potential risks of supplying to poorer credits
- Collateral for financiers; this a well-established path as banks and other finance providers value the support of the insurers' A-rated security, effectively upgrading the ratings of the receivables
- Subsidised assistance for debt collection; support is often available "on the ground" in the local export market

The market for Export Trade Credit Insurance has plenty of capacity to support businesses who wish to secure their receivables risk, whether for established exporters or those who are exploring overseas opportunities for the first time.



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An additional benefit is the ability to tap into the insurers' knowledge of sanctioned individuals, companies and countries which helps to avoid any unintended exposures and ensure that you don't fall foul of regulations, incur penalties or risk brand damage through unwanted publicity.

Export Trade Credit Insurance absolutely has the potential to ensure the very survival of your business if or when a large bad debt occurs.

If you're considering expanding your export operations, or just starting out, a consultation with a Trade Credit Insurance expert can help protect your receivables and grow with confidence.

For further information please contact on 0410 625 991 or email graham@novacreditrisk.com.au



Graham Crozier, principal of Nova Credit Risk, has 40 years of experience in Trade Credit Insurance in Australia, the London market and SE Asia, including 8 years as CEO of one of the world's largest Export Trade Credit Insurance companies



INTERNATIONAL TRADE DELEGATION VISITS THE HUNTER

At the end of September, 17 high ranking international trade delegates undertook a three-day tour of the Hunter. The region showcased its leading advanced manufacturing and clean economy technologies businesses for the visitors to experience first-hand the trade opportunities available.

The NSW Government invited delegates from Canada, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Denmark, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom to tour prominent businesses and industrial sites.

The Trade Mission was introduced to leading industries and emerging innovative businesses including:

- Australia's first hardware accelerator and industry prototyping lab, The Melt who are leading the way for clean technology and advanced manufacturing in the Hunter
- Recyclable solar innovator, Kardinia Energy who have developed silicon free printed solar panels that were used for British rock band Coldplay's world tour
- Cutting edge technology and pioneering micro-emulsion flow batteries at Allegro Energy
- Visiting regional leaders at the AGL Hunter Energy Hub and BHP Mt Arthur on regional transition planning and reskilling.

The region is also home to a range of advanced manufacturing capabilities, including med-tech, energy as well as heavy engineering and is supported by a skilled workforce and strong industry-academic collaboration such as the Newcastle Institute for Energy & Resources.

Delegates also immersed themselves in the unique offerings of the Murrook Cultural Centre and engaged with two of the region's leading Aboriginal businesses, Blackrock Industries and Native Botanical Brewery.

EXPORTING INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED

On 15 September, the Federal Government announced the launch of the \$50 million Accessing New Markets Initiative (ANMI). It delivers on a election commitment to open new and previously overlooked export markets for Australian businesses.

Through ANMI, Australian businesses will get practical, targeted support to identify new partners and customers. It is designed to ensure Australian exporters aren't just reacting to change – they're getting ahead of it.

The Government is working hand-in-hand with industry to make sure this initiative delivers real value and meets the needs of businesses and sectors impacted by changing global trade.

Austrade will design tailored support to peak industry bodies and their members. Support to Australian exporters will be fast, flexible and targeted, including additional programs such as in-market trade advisors, enhanced offshore events, and new strategic initiatives.

ANMI builds on what the Albanese Labor Government has already delivered for Australian exporters, including:

Removing over \$20 billion in trade impediments on our exports to China – allowing farmers, fishers, miners and winemakers back into this market at higher volumes than ever before.

Legislating a free trade agreement with the United Arab Emirates – which will deliver over \$600 million in additional annual exports into the Middle East.

Unlocking a record \$53 billion in two-way trade with India last year, after legislating our first trade agreement with India.

Delivering an additional \$2 billion in Southeast Asia trade outcomes over the last two years for Australian businesses.

INDUSTRY-FOCUSED TRAINING FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

Tourism is vital to Australia, supporting over 706,000 jobs and underpinning more than 360,000 businesses across the country. The Australian Government has partnered with the Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC) to launch the Quality Tourism eLearning Hub, a new training hub created for Australia's tourism industry.

Developed with eLearning specialists, etrainu, the eLearning Hub is designed to support tourism operators and their staff to build and improve skills, enhance professionalism and develop stronger business capability. The eLearning Hub forms part of ATIC's Quality Tourism Framework (QTF), which offers industry operators a suite of online training and accreditation programs designed to build capability and quality across the industry.

The Federal Government has provided \$8 million in funding to enhance and improve the QTF.

A national library of short, practical courses sits at the heart of the eLearning Hub, developed with input from industry and subject matter experts. Topics include sustainability, accessibility, customer service readiness, and other critical areas to help businesses grow and compete.

Accessible on any device, the eLearning Hub supports learning anywhere and at any time through videos, interactive modules, and downloadable resources.



30 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE CELEBRATED AT THE 2025 NEWCASTLE EXCELLENCE IN BUILDING AWARDS

The Master Builders Association of NSW proudly marked a historic milestone on Friday, 5 September, with the 30th anniversary of the Newcastle Excellence in Building Awards. This prestigious event once again showcased the exceptional talent, skill, and innovation driving the building and construction industry across the Hunter, Central Coast, Manning, Oxley, and Tamworth regions.

The sold-out gala, held at NEX Newcastle, brought together leading professionals from across the industry for an evening of networking, fine dining, and celebration. Guests paid tribute to three decades of excellence while applauding the projects and shaping the future of construction in the region.

Judged by a notable panel including Wayne Deane, Len Blakeney, Geoffrey Douglass, Paul Hickson, Matthew Sainsbury, Matthew Haines and the Women in Building & Associated Services Committee, this year saw record-breaking entries across residential, commercial, and apprentice categories.



Major Award Winners for 2025 included:

Commercial Apprentice of the Year – Madelyn Henry
Housing Apprentice of the Year – Alex Stivano
Newcastle MBA Group Training Apprentice of the Year – John Finefeuiaki
University Graduate of the Year Award – Jessie Webb
Women in Building Award – Jennifer Falk
Young Builder of the Year – Eli Conroy
Subcontractor of the Year – Commercial – Ceil Construction Pty Ltd
Subcontractor of the Year – Residential – Coastline Pools & Spas
Commercial Builder of the Year – Kingston Building
Residential Builder of the Year – Tecorp

The Master Builders Association of NSW extended its gratitude to the 2025 sponsors for their invaluable support: Newcastle Master Builders Apprentices, Alinta Energy, CBUS, CertLane Building Certifiers, Master Builders Insurance Brokers, TRUECORE® steel, Wests Group Australia, Keystone Lawyers, and Pitcher Partners.

A very special acknowledgement was also made to the long-time Master of Ceremonies Mike Rabbitt, who has been part of the Awards for close to three decades. Reflecting on his first appearance at the inaugural event in 1995, Rabbitt shared fond memories of hosting that night after stepping straight off the NBN news desk and noted how far the Awards have come since.

The evening's celebrations were made even more memorable with outstanding live entertainment from Kaylens Rain, who brought energy and atmosphere to this landmark occasion.

This year's celebration not only recognised the region's outstanding achievements but also honoured the legacy of the Newcastle Excellence in Building Awards, cementing its place as one of the most highly regarded events in the NSW construction calendar.

KINGSTON BUILDING CELEBRATES LANDMARK MBA COMMERCIAL BUILDER OF THE YEAR AWARD



Kingston Building is honoured to have been awarded Commercial Builder of the Year 2025 at the MBA Newcastle Excellence in Building Awards. Alongside this prestigious win, Kingston proudly won an additional five awards spanning projects across education, health, housing, industrial and community. These accolades are evidence of our commitment to the delivery of projects safely, sustainably and to the highest quality standards, reinforcing our core values of People, Planet and Performance.

Winning across such a diverse range of sectors is a testament to the breadth of the skills and knowledge of the Kingston team. We consistently build strong partnerships with clients, consultants,

The Kingston Building team celebrating six wins at the 2025 Newcastle Excellence in Building Awards

subcontractors and wider communities, and our professionalism and collaborative approach is second to none.

Managing Director John Tonkin said: "To receive the Commercial Builder of the Year Award, along with industry recognition across five categories, is a landmark moment for Kingston. It reflects the capability of our people, the trust of our clients and the dedication that underpins every project we deliver. We are incredibly proud of the team and the award-winning outcomes we continue to achieve together."



Kingston

BUILDING

6 X WINNER

- Commercial Builder Of The Year 2025
- Public Buildings Under \$1m for Corpus Christi Primary School
- Commercial Projects \$2-4m for Blackbutt Nature Reserve Multi-Purpose Centre & Café
- Affordable and Specialised Housing Development \$4-6m for LAHC, Waratah West
- Public Buildings \$1-5m for Blackbutt Multi-Purpose Centre & Café
- Extensions, Renovations & Refurbishments Over \$8m for Whiteley Group Therapeutic Goods Manufacturing Facility & New Office

2025

COMMERCIAL
BUILDER
OF THE YEAR



In winning these awards Kingston Building thanks our suppliers and subcontractors and provide a special mention to the collaborative efforts of our partners in each of the projects.

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NEWCASTLE EXCELLENCE IN BUILDING AWARDS WINNERS

2025 Commercial Apprentice of the Year: Madelyn Henry

2025 Housing Apprentice of the Year: Alex Stivano

Newcastle MBA Group Training Apprentice of the Year:
John Finefeuiaki

Excellence in Apprentice Training: John McDougall

University Graduate of the Year Award: Jessie Webb

Contract Homes under \$1 million: SABR Constructions for BLANC

Contract Homes \$1 - \$1.5 million: Built By Eli for Chester Lane

Contract Homes \$1.5 - \$2.5 million: Built By Eli for Janet Street

Contract Homes \$2.5 - \$3.5 million: Joss McNamara for The Saddle House

Contract Homes \$6 - \$8 million: J Moore Builders for Headland House

Contract Homes over \$8 million: Tecorp for OVD House

Display Homes under \$500,000: Palm Lake Works for Tampa Display Home

Display Homes over \$500,000: Metricon Homes for Riva 44

House Additions, Alterations and Renovations under \$500,000: Spartan Projects for Speers Point Project

House Additions, Alterations and Renovations \$500,000 - \$700,000: Lou Projects for Charlton House

House Additions, Alterations and Renovations \$700,000 - \$800,000: Coastline Builders and Designers for New Lambton Renovation

House Additions, Alterations and Renovations \$800,000 - \$1 million: Lexar Construction for Tangerine House

House Additions, Alterations and Renovations \$1 - \$1.5 million: Burkility Building for La Quinta East

House Additions, Alterations and Renovations \$1.5 - \$2 million: Ponman Constructions for West Renovation and Addition

House Additions, Alterations and Renovations over \$2 million: Custom Built Projects NSW for Foreshore Drive Residence

Apartment Additions, Alterations & Renovations: Bryant Built for The Cottage, The Nook & The Nest

Medium Density Dual Occupancy: Joyce Constructions (NSW) for Cornwallis Close

Medium Density 3 to 5 Dwellings: Built By Eli for Maggie Street

Medium Density 5 or More Dwellings: Custom Built Projects NSW for Olas Villas

Granny Flats: Granny Flat Solutions for Umina Beach

Bathroom Projects - under \$30,000: Golden Hammer Renovations for Bathroom renovation Elmore Vale

Bathroom Projects \$30,000 - \$50,000: Stroud Homes Central Coast for Stonebrae

Bathroom Projects over \$50,000: Custom Built Projects NSW for Foreshore Fitzgerald Bathroom

Kitchen Projects under \$50,000: Burkility Building for Everton Street Hamilton

Kitchen Projects \$50,000 - \$75,000: Stroud Homes Central Coast for Stonebrae

Kitchen Projects \$75,000 - \$100,000: Custom Built Projects NSW for Foreshore Fitzgerald Kitchen

Kitchen Projects over \$100,000: Nadin West Joinery for New Lambton Residence

Residential Fit-out: Nadin West Joinery for New Lambton Residence

Historic Restoration under \$1 million: Australian Heritage Restorations for Tinonee Courthouse Residence

Historic Restoration over \$1 million: BRW Constructions for Parkway Avenue, Hamilton South

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**NEWCASTLE MASTER BUILDERS
APPRENTICES**

Outdoor Landscaping Projects: JSH Projects for La Belle

Swimming Pools: JSH Projects for La Belle

Aged Care / Lifestyle Over 55's under \$15 million: Palm Lake Works for Rhodes Sports Club

Aged Care / Lifestyle Over 55's over \$50 million: Richard Crookes Constructions for Fresh Hope Aged Care

Commercial Projects under \$2 million: North Construction & Building for Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary extensions

Commercial Projects \$2 - \$4 million: Kingston Building for Blackbutt Nature Reserve Multi-Purpose Centre

Commercial Projects \$4 - \$6 million: Kingston Building for Homes NSW Affordable & Specialised Housing

Commercial Projects \$9 - \$15 million: North Construction & Building for Ingenia Fullerton Cove

Commercial Projects \$20 - \$30 million: Red Eye Constructions & Interiors for Encore by Mingara

Commercial Projects Over \$60 million: Richard Crookes Constructions for St Bede's Catholic College - Stages 2, 3 & 4

Extensions, Renovations and Refurbishments under \$500,000: Boyd Building & Developments for Nesbitt on Darby - Salon Refurbishment

Extensions, Renovations and Refurbishments \$500,000 - \$1 million: Reeman Constructions for Tiona Palms Pavillion

Extensions, Renovations and Refurbishments \$1 - \$5 million: Skelcon for Toronto Workers Club, Sports Bar

Extensions, Renovations and Refurbishments over \$8 million: Joyce Constructions (NSW) for Port City Bowling Club

Extensions, Renovations and Refurbishments over \$8 million: Kingston Building for Whiteley Group Therapeutic Plant

Industrial Buildings Under \$12 million: Drayton Group for FCS Rutherford

Industrial Buildings Over \$12 million: Q Design & Construct for Newcastle Bulk Storage Facility

Interior and Shop Fit-outs under \$400,000: Pluim Joinery for Jan Logan

Interior and Shop Fit-outs \$400,000 - \$700,000: Pluim Joinery for Akoya Greenwich

Interior and Shop Fit-outs \$1 - \$2 million: Pluim Joinery for Little National Hotel

Interior and Shop Fit-outs \$2 - \$5 million: SHAPE Australia for Hall & Wilcox Lawyers Newcastle Office Fitout

Interior and Shop Fit-outs \$5 - \$10 million: Graphite Projects for University of Newcastle HPE Building Refurbishment

Interior and Shop Fit-outs over \$10 million: SHAPE Australia for Ausgrid HQN

Public Buildings under \$1 million: Kingston Building for Corpus Christi Primary School, Waratah

Public Buildings \$1 - \$5 million: Kingston Building for Blackbutt Nature Reserve Multi-Purpose Centre

Public Buildings \$10 - \$20 million: Graph Builders for Charlestown Residential Eating Disorders Centre

Public Buildings over \$50 million: Richard Crookes Constructions for St Bede's Catholic College - Stages 2, 3 & 4

Restoration of an Historic Building under \$1.5 million: Australian Heritage Restorations for The Junction Primary School

Restoration of an Historic Building over \$3 million: Falzon Homes for Manning River Times Building Taree

Swimming Pools over \$500,000: North Construction & Building for Ingenia Fullerton Cove Swimming Pool

JUDGES AWARDS

Best use of Timber – Residential: T. White Building & Construction for Humphreys Tree House

Best use of Stone – Residential: JSH Projects for La Belle

Best use of Brick – Residential: J Moore Builders for Headland House

Best use of Timber – Commercial: Graph Builders for Natura Ingenia Clubhouse, Bobs Farm

Best use of Brick – Commercial: North Construction & Building for Ingenia Fullerton Cove

MAJORS

2025 Women in Building Award: Jennifer Falk

2025 Young Builder of the Year: Eli Conroy

2025 Subcontractor of the Year Commercial: Ceil Construction

2025 Subcontractor of the Year Residential: Coastline Pools & Spas

2025 Commercial Builder of the Year: Kingston Building

2025 Residential Builder of the Year: Tecorp

MORE LOCAL PROJECTS DECLARED STATE SIGNIFICANT

The Property Council of Australia has welcomed the declaration of three more Hunter and Central Coast housing projects as State Significant Development (SSD) following recommendations from the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA).

Together, these projects could deliver 584 new homes – including provision for affordable housing:

- 70 John Whiteway Drive, Gosford – 120 homes in a residential flat building
 - Sydney Junction Hotel plus 8 Beaumont Street and 2 Hudson Street, Hamilton, Newcastle – 272 homes as part of a shop-top housing development
 - 644–650 Pacific Highway, Belmont, Lake Macquarie – 192 homes in a shop-top housing project
- Property Council Hunter and Central Coast Regional Director Nuatali Nelmes said the decision showed real momentum in getting new homes moving. “Declaring these projects as State significant recognises their scale and importance to the Hunter and Central Coast’s growth,” Ms Nelmes said.

“This gives them an alternate pathway through the planning system and helps deliver the kind of housing our communities urgently need – from apartments close to transport, to family homes in growing suburbs.”

Ms Nelmes said the decision reflected the work of the HDA to identify and back-in projects that can unlock housing supply, noting that planning approvals must be matched by infrastructure that arrives on time and at scale.

“The Authority is delivering on its purpose — clearing roadblocks and accelerating projects that bring real supply to the market. It’s a welcome shift toward a planning system where growth is approved and concurrently needs to be actively supported by the social infrastructure, roads, and essential services that communities rely on.

“With housing affordability and rental stress still a significant challenge across our region, every project that gets the green light is another step towards giving local families and essential workers a fair shot at finding a home. The real success will lie in the delivery of these projects.”

Since the formation of the HDA in January, 11 Expression of Interest (EOIs) have been considered from the Central Coast with 4 declared with the potential to deliver 1,209 new homes. In the Hunter, 22 EOIs have been considered, with 10 declared with the potential for 2,382 new homes.

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Getting paid on time:

Why 'pay when paid' clauses don't work

Sarah Hammond

Emily Barnett

Moray & Agnew

Cashflow is the lifeblood of the construction industry. But subcontractors know all too well the frustration of long contracting chains, tight profit margins and payment delays. Often, those delays put serious financial pressure on smaller businesses.

To address this, the *Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 1999* (NSW) (the Act) was introduced. Its purpose is simple: to make it easier for subcontractors to get paid, and harder for head contractors or principals to withhold or delay payment.

One of the lesser-known protections under the Act is the ban on "pay when paid" clauses.

What is a 'pay when paid' clause?

At its simplest, a 'pay when paid' clause is where a head contractor tells a subcontractor:

"I'll pay you only after the principal pays me."

Historically, these provisions were popular because they were practical for head contractors and on the surface seemed "fair". But in practice, it meant that subcontractors could wait months or years for their money, and risk not being paid at all, when there was nothing wrong with their work.

However, the Act goes further than just banning that basic type of clause.

It treats the following as pay when paid provisions (and therefore void). Clauses that:

- make payment of money owing from one party to another dependent on the payment from a third party
- link the due date for payment of money owing to the timing of when a third party pays the first party, or
- make the liability or due date for payment of money owing dependent or contingent on the operation of another contract.

Common examples still seen in contracts

Even though the Act has banned these clauses for many years, they still regularly appear in contracts. Typical examples include:

- Making final payment contingent on an upstream contract reaching practical completion.
- Releasing retention money only once the head contractor obtains an occupancy certificate or once the upstream defects liability period has ended.

For example, in *Lal Lal Wind Farms Nom Co Pty Ltd* as agent for the *Lal Lal Wind Farms Partnership v Vestas – Australian Wind Technology Pty Ltd & Max Tonkin* [2021] VSC 807, Vestas' entitlement to payment under the contract was dependent upon practical completion being achieved under another contract and was therefore void pursuant to the Victorian equivalent Act.

In *Maxcon Constructions Pty Ltd v Vadasz* [2018] HCA 5 the release of the subcontractor's retention moneys was dependent upon the head contractor fulfilling its upstream obligation to obtain a certificate of occupancy and was therefore void as a pay when paid clause.

Grey areas to watch

Some areas remain less clear:

- **Bank guarantees instead of retention money:** Some suggest this could avoid the pay when paid prohibition when

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the release of bank guarantees as security is tied to upstream completion, but the Courts haven't ruled on it yet. The key question will be whether release of a bank guarantee counts as "money owing" under the Act.

- **Linked dispute resolution clauses:** Some contracts try to postpone payment until a related dispute is resolved upstream. Limited case law suggests these too could be struck down as pay when paid provisions if payment is delayed until the upstream process is finished.

Practical takeaways for subcontractors

While the law gives strong protection, it's always better to be proactive. If you spot a clause that looks like a pay when paid:

- Don't assume it's valid, it probably isn't.
- Ask for it to be removed before signing.
- Know your rights. You're entitled to progress payments within the timeframes set by law, regardless of whether the head contractor has been paid.
- Seek advice if you're unsure. It's easier to deal with a bad clause before signing than to fight it later.

Further information / assistance regarding the issues raised in this article is available from the authors, Sarah Hammond, Partner, Emily Barnett, Lawyer, or your usual contact at Moray & Agnew.



Sarah Hammond is a Partner at Moray & Agnew. She is an experienced commercial litigation, and building and construction lawyer. She has an impeccable track record on major disputes in all courts including the High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court.



Emily Barnett is a Lawyer at Moray & Agnew. She is a skilled lawyer in the construction & projects and commercial litigation & dispute resolution practices at Moray & Agnew Newcastle.

Construction begins on the City Campus Student Accommodation

Construction has officially commenced on the University of Newcastle's new City Campus Student Accommodation, with a sod turning ceremony taking place on 5 September at the site, located on the corner of Civic Lane and Worth Place, Newcastle.

Federal member for Newcastle, Sharon Claydon MP said the start of construction marks an exciting milestone for Newcastle.

"High-quality student accommodation is essential to attracting and supporting students from across Australia and the world.

"This development means students can live close to campus, close to work, and close to all that Newcastle has to offer."

The University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alex Zelinsky AO, described the sod turn as a major milestone for Newcastle and the region.

"Our new student accommodation will provide a lively, comfortable and supportive home away from home for both domestic and international students in the heart of Newcastle. We know that our students who live on campus do consistently well academically, so providing a new high-quality and engaging space will mean our students who

live here will have a space that will help them achieve their potential."

"As the University celebrates 60 years, the City Campus Student Accommodation is the next phase of our Honeysuckle site development and represents our ongoing commitment to improving the student experience."

"This development will also assist in providing a new accommodation option for students who may otherwise struggle to find suitable accommodation in the challenging rental market," Professor Zelinsky said.

Designed by Architectus, the nine-storey building will offer 445 student beds in a range of room types including micro studios, studios, twin rooms, and six-bed shared apartments. Each option will feature kitchen and bathroom facilities, along with access to shared living areas, an outdoor terrace, dining spaces, and laundry rooms.

It will also include indoor and outdoor communal spaces for students, as well as dedicated facilities for University support staff.

The project will be delivered by Hansen Yuncken, with completion expected by early 2027.



\$1 billion Pre-sale Finance Guarantee open for business

Expressions of Interest (EOI) are now open for the NSW Government's world-leading Pre-sale Finance Guarantee program (PFG). From 22 September eligible applicants have been able to apply to have the NSW Government commit to purchasing off-the-plan dwellings in eligible residential developments to help secure finance and bring construction forward on much-needed housing across NSW.

The Government has introduced a range of reforms to increase the number of homes entering the system and speed up assessment timeframes, but getting homes built is the next big challenge.

Under the five-year initiative, the Government will leverage its strong fiscal position to commit to buy up to 50% of homes off the plan in approved NSW housing projects.

Eligible homes will be valued at up to \$2 million each, with support ranging from \$5 million to \$50 million per project. Up to \$1 billion in pre-sales will be committed to over the life of the project, through the use of a revolving fund.

As homes are sold and projects are completed, builders will have the option to:

- Rescind the commitments, releasing the funds and allowing the program to bring more homes forward for construction, or,
- Call on the Guarantee, where the homes are then purchased by the NSW Government at a discounted rate and either rented, or sold into the market.

The challenge of meeting pre-sale requirements is one of the most common issues cited by stakeholders in securing finance, and has been outlined as a key hurdle for industry in the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission's Review of housing supply challenges and policy options for New South Wales.

In the past five years, the time between approval and commencement of new apartments has increased 39%, from 5.6 months to 7.8 months, and in NSW there are more than 13,000 developments approved but not commenced.

This program will not only shorten the time between approval and construction but also reduce risk in the residential construction finance sector, giving lenders and homebuyers greater certainty.

The NSW Building Commissioner will also be engaged as part of the program's application assessment process so only developers, builders and their projects that meet capability, credibility and capacity benchmarks are supported.

Government injects \$9.2 million to accelerate building certification and trades licensing approvals

The Federal Government is injecting \$9.2 million across four years into initiatives aimed at increasing the number of building certifiers and speeding up the licensing of building tradespeople.

The critical funding will boost the certifier workforce through reducing red tape and speeding up home building licence application approvals to help fill skills gaps in the building industry.

There are around 1,300 building certifiers across different registration types in NSW working in both private industry and local government, who as public officials play an important role in conducting critical inspections required to finalise residential building approvals.

To ensure the state has enough certifiers to help meet demand as the state pushes towards building 377,000 new homes by 2029, the NSW Government will inject \$4.72 million across four years into measures to make it easier for existing certifiers to stay

in, and new certifiers to enter, the industry.

Under the changes, new flexible certifier registration options will be introduced, providing pro-rata registration fees for part-time certifiers, and a pause on registration fees for those on extended leave to ensure fees do not disincentivise them from practicing part-time or returning to the profession.

Building Commission NSW will also increase its capacity to process new certifier applications and renewals to facilitate faster entry into the sector.

A free continuing professional development course to support certifiers returning to work after a career break will also encourage those who have been away from the industry to get back into the profession.

Additionally, "Inspecting Up" provisions, which allow restricted building surveyors to conduct critical stage inspections under supervision, will be supported to boost capacity in the industry.

To accommodate the expected increase in the number of trades hoping to enter, re-enter or gain a new licence in the industry, a further \$4.48 million across four years will create additional capacity to process home building licence applications.

This will ensure the required rigorous relevant checks and balances are completed at pace when assessing licence and certificate applications as well as renewals.

Building Commission NSW assessed almost 24,000 new home building related licencing applications in the 2024-25 financial year.



Upgrading existing homes to combat climate change

On 16 September the Housing Industry Association (HIA) appeared at the Senate Inquiry into the Climate Risk Assessment to argue that the Federal government should drive a national, coordinated plan to make Australia's homes stronger and safer in the face of natural disasters.

"The Federal government must lead a consistent approach to climate adaptation across all states and territories. Cyclones, floods, bushfires and hail storms are not new threats, but the way we prepare for them must change," said HIA Chief Executive Industry & Policy, Simon Croft.

"A patchwork of policies won't cut it. We need one clear, national framework to lift resilience and keep housing affordable.

"In our submission, HIA recommends the creation of a single, independently verified national risk-rating tool to guide planning decisions, inform insurers and give homeowners the information they need to strengthen their properties.

"HIA is also advocating for a 'Hierarchy of Control' model based on proven workplace-safety principles that ranks hazard-control measures from the most to the least effective, ensuring the strongest protections are prioritised.

"The greatest opportunity in mitigating climate change lies in upgrading Australia's existing housing stock. While new homes already meet high and improving standards, the country's 8-10 million older dwellings remain the most exposed to extreme weather and require targeted action to lift their resilience.

"The real challenge is the millions of older homes that need focused upgrades to withstand future events.

"HIA calls on the Federal government to work with states, territories and industry on a clear timetable and resources for these reforms. Taking a steady, coordinated approach now will strengthen our homes and communities and reduce the cost and disruption of future natural disasters," concluded Mr Croft.

Jordan Beckers wins at the 2025 Australian Trades Small Business Champions Awards

Jordan Beckers from Pure Design Constructions, based in Wyong, has been named Young Small Business Champion Trades Entrepreneur at the 2025 Australian Trades Small Business Champion Awards, the premier program recognising outstanding trades-based small business operators nationwide.

Jordan received a Champions trophy and winner's certificate at a glittering red-carpet presentation held at The Hyatt Regency, Sydney, on Friday 29 August. Hosted by Joel Ozborn, the gala evening — often described as the “Logies of Australia’s trade sector” — welcomed trades business leaders from across the country.

Now in its third year, the Australian Trades Small Business Champion Awards celebrate and inspire the most dynamic, innovative, and high-performing trades businesses across metropolitan, regional, and rural Australia. In 2025, more than 50 trade categories across retail, services, and manufacturing were contested.

Jordan stood out in the Young Small Business Champion Trades Entrepreneur category, impressing an independent panel of expert judges. Evaluation criteria included business strategy, growth, financial performance, sustainability, innovation, customer service excellence and community contribution.

“Being selected as a Champion from a nationwide field speaks volumes about the tenacity and leadership of Jordan Beckers,” said Steve Loe, Awards Founder and Managing Director of Precedent Productions, which manages the program.



Jordan Beckers of Pure Design Constructions

“Tradies form the backbone of Australia’s small business economy. With pressures of ownership, it’s vital we acknowledge the businesspeople perform at the highest standard, and Jordan Beckers from Pure Design Constructions is one of them.

The 2025 Australian Trades Small Business Champion Awards are proudly sponsored by Westpac, Lifestyle Tradie, NOVA Employment, Xclusive Business Sales, VJB Group, Castaway Forecasting, Big Clean and Boa.



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Early works pave the way for affordable housing in Newcastle's CBD

City of Newcastle has turned its focus underground as part of a new milestone in its landmark affordable housing project on Hunter Street. A development application has been lodged to enable the investigation and remediation of any former mine workings located underneath the 4,125 sqm site known as Rail Bridge Row.

Chair of City of Newcastle's Asset Advisory Committee, Cr Declan Clausen, said this work is essential to stabilise the site in advance of future construction and follows a range of site investigations.

"Much of our city sits above former underground mines, a reminder of our city's industrial past. By securing the ground beneath us, we're working for the future of inclusive, affordable living on the Rail Bridge Row site," Cr Clausen said.

"Early site assessments, as well as remediation work undertaken in recent years on nearby sites suggests there may be former mine workings from the Dudley Coal Seam present underneath the Rail Bridge Row site.

"This DA will allow us to gather more detail on the site and enable us to remediate any workings that are located, as part of a comprehensive mine grouting and verification plan, which has received approval from Subsidence Advisory New South Wales

"Subject to approval of the DA, remediation works are anticipated to begin in March 2026 targeting the Dudley Coal Seam, which is located approximately 25 metres below ground level.

"Comprehensive Aboriginal and European heritage assessments have also been conducted in recognition of the site's cultural and historical significance, to ensure no heritage items would be impacted by future excavations or mine grouting work."

The Rail Bridge Row site was purchased by City of Newcastle from Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation in 2020 and is earmarked for a multi-storey mixed-use development, that will provide affordable housing units alongside ground-floor retail.

Chair of City of Newcastle's Housing Affordability Working Party, Cr Elizabeth Adamczyk, said the project could pave the way for similar developments in the future at other City of Newcastle sites.

"This bold affordable housing project is another significant step forward in City of Newcastle's work to ensure housing in every part of our city supports a flourishing and diverse community, with access to jobs and amenity and transport networks, for people of all incomes," Cr Adamczyk said.

"With submissions for a Community Housing Provider to act as development partner currently under review, these foundational works send a clear signal to our community and potential future partners of this local government's commitment to doing everything we can to foster a more accessible, inclusive and affordable housing system."

The Rail Bridge Row site is located at 280 Hunter Street and stretches from Brown Street to near the intersection of Darby and Hunter Streets, opposite the Crown Street light rail stop.



Weak August approvals underscore need for planning reform

The Property Council of Australia says that NSW continues to fall short on new housing approvals, with ABS data released on 30 September reinforcing the urgency of the need for Parliament to pass the NSW Planning Systems Reform Bill (the Bill).

August data shows 3,637 dwellings were approved in NSW. Approvals are just the first step to completions, and NSW currently needs an average of 7,164 completions each month to be on track to deliver 377,000 new homes by 2029.

Property Council NSW Executive Director Katie Stevenson said the data showed further planning system reforms were essential to step up the pace to meet housing demand.

"Month after month we've seen approvals that don't match the scale of our share of the National Housing Accord target," Ms Stevenson said.

"That's why it's important Parliament now works through the detail of the Bill carefully and constructively, so the reforms land well and deliver the outcomes the people of NSW need.

"The Bill tackles the very issues holding up housing delivery – from clearing the backlog of simpler projects to unblocking complex projects that can deliver hundreds of homes and jobs. These are the common-sense reforms Property Council members have long called for."

The Bill proposes a suite of changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, including:

- Establishing a Development Coordination Authority to centralise and speed up agency referrals.
- Enshrining the Housing Delivery Authority in legislation.
- Introducing a Targeted Assessment Pathway for low-risk applications.
- Expanding complying development and creating a state-wide Community Participation Plan.

"These reforms will help to shift the focus from process to delivery. They will create consistency across councils, give industry greater certainty, and most importantly, help more projects get approved faster," Ms Stevenson said.

"This Bill is a key test of how serious we are about tackling the housing crisis – Parliament should progress these reforms in a bipartisan way, with the right level of consultation and scrutiny to make them effective," Ms Stevenson said.

Also on 30 September, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure team leading the reforms briefed Property Council members on the detail of the Bill.

"Industry has welcomed the opportunity to engage closely with government on these reforms, and ongoing consultation will be critical to making sure the Bill is workable in practice and achieves its intent of unlocking more homes," Ms Stevenson said.

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Two Mafia hit men are walking deep into a forest in the middle of the night.

One of them says, "I gotta admit I'm scared out here."

The other replies, "You're scared? I gotta walk back alone!"

A sheepdog returns to his farmer and says, "All right, I've got your 70 sheep back in the east pen."

The farmer replies, "What!? I have 67 sheep, not 70!"

The sheepdog gives him a withering look and says, "I know. I rounded them up."

A guy goes to the doctor and says, "I keep seeing a werewolf, with big sharp teeth."

The doctor says, "Have you seen a psychiatrist?"

The guy says, "No, just a werewolf."

This guy always smoked two cigarettes at a time. If anyone ever asked him why, he would always answer, "I'm smoking one for myself and one for my brother who is in jail."

One day he was only smoking one cigarette. Someone asked him "Is your brother out of jail?"

He replied, "No, I quit."

Three golf clubs walk into a bar. The Putter orders a beer, the Wedge orders a whisky. The bartender asks the third one if he wants anything.

He replies, "No thanks, I'm the Driver."

A woman gave her husband an envelope with, "Not to be opened until 2027" on it.

Inside was a list of reasons why he cannot be trusted to follow simple instructions.

A rich man gets into one of his limos, where he is greeted by his new driver:

"Good morning, sir, my name is Charles and it's nice to finally meet you," said the driver.

"I never address my employees by their first name" snapped the rich man.

"Sorry sir," the driver apologised, "my name is Charles Darling."

"Drive me to the bank, Charles," the rich man replied.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Don't worry about failures, worry about the chances you miss when you don't even try."

- Jack Canfield



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