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UPDATE

INNOVATION
IN THE
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From the Editor



The latest GDP growth figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics are uninspiring, with a seasonally adjusted figure of just 0.2% for the June quarter and just 1.5% for the 2023/24 financial year.

This figure is reported as the lowest annual financial year economic growth since 1991-92, excluding the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Perhaps even more worrying is that GDP per capita was down for the sixth consecutive quarter, falling 0.4%.

So, the only reason we have any growth is because of a population increase. Without this, we would be in recession for 18 months.

There is much focus on inflation and interest rates and while these are important, there seems little discussion by either side of politics regarding Australia's continuing poor performance in raising productivity.

For a period of true economic growth, we need to boost productivity.

Productivity has been almost flat for the last five years and you have to look back to the late 1990s to see a period of significant productivity growth when it was almost 2% pa. Australia is not matching global productivity growth performance and has been steadily dropping in world rankings.

With a federal election to be held before mid-May 2025, it will be interesting to see if either side have any cohesive policy on raising productivity.

One of the problems is that it is not an easy fix and requires action in a number of policy areas, including industrial relations, regulatory compliance and tax reform.

Unfortunately, many of the areas that require change are politically charged and require political leaders that are brave enough to make changes that may not be politically popular in the short term. In Australian politics, it is often seen wise to not make significant changes and thus not create an easy target for the entrenched negative politics.

But change is required, and leadership needs to be shown.

Future generations will not judge today's politicians on what they didn't do but on their actual achievements in making Australia a better place to live.

And one of the glaring areas is productivity growth so that the country can experience true sustained growth and allow for increasing living standards for all Australians.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

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Government \$850 million investment for missile facility at Williamstown

The Federal Government will contribute up to \$850 million in partnership with Kongsberg Defence Australia to manufacture and service missiles at Williamstown.

The project, which involves construction of a factory in the Newcastle Airport precinct, is expected to generate more than 500 jobs in the construction phase and almost \$100 million in economic benefits to the local area. Once complete, the factory is expected to employ approximately 100 people.

The factory will manufacture and service Naval Strike Missiles (NSM) and Joint Strike Missiles (JSM) to be used by the Australian Defence Force (ADF). It will be one of only two facilities in the world capable of producing NSM and JSM with the other site in Kongsberg, Norway.

Construction of this factory, expected to start later this year, represents a leap forward for Australia's defence industry that highlights the Government's commitment to a future made in Australia.

The Government is including Kongsberg Defence Australia as a strategic partner in the Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance (GWEO) Enterprise. The GWEO Enterprise is backed by a commitment of up to \$21 billion over the coming decade through the Government's 2024 Integrated Investment Program.

It delivers on priorities in the 2024 National Defence Strategy to both develop the ADF's ability to precisely strike targets at longer range and manufacture munitions in Australia.

The JSM – which can be fitted to the F-35A aircraft – and NSM are modern anti-ship cruise missiles designed to defeat highly capable enemy warships. Both can also be deployed against land-based targets.

The NSM will enhance the maritime and land strike capabilities of Hobart class destroyers and Anzac class frigates, and will



replace the Harpoon anti-ship missile, supporting the increased lethality of the enhanced surface combatant fleet. HMAS Sydney test-fired a NSM in July 2024.

The establishment of the manufacturing facility at the Newcastle Airport precinct will help make Australia more self-reliant and boost war stocks, while supporting the local economy and Australia's defence industry.

Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery, the Hon Pat Conroy MP said "Today's announcement is another example of the Albanese Government's commitment to keeping Australians safe while also supporting a future made in Australia.

"This is about investing in our advanced, high-tech manufacturing industry and developing our sovereign defence industrial base in areas which have been identified as strategic priorities, which in turn means we can accelerate capability delivery to the ADF.

"We cannot deliver the generational uplift in capability outlined in the National Defence Strategy without our industry partners, and we look forward to working with Kongsberg Defence Australia as a GWEO Strategic Partner."

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2024/25 Region Ready launched

Newcastle based Creative Agency and passionate regional advocates Out of the Square has launched the 2024/25 'Region Ready' Video and Website regionready.com.au

'Region Ready' is an ongoing self-funded initiative of Out of the Square designed to showcase Newcastle and the Hunter region's natural assets, world class infrastructure, diverse capabilities and enviable lifestyle. The campaign was first kicked off in 2019 out of a desire to assist and empower as many businesses and community groups as possible to be able to promote themselves and the region. This 3rd edition is again offered for free and is available to view and download at regionready.com.au.

This newly created purpose-built website also houses other initiatives in the series including the collaborations of 'Innovation Ready', 'Healthtech Ready' and the 'Hunter Energy Evolution'. Offering a one stop shop celebrating and telling the stories of the Hunters smarts and ever evolving potential. It is a great asset to those wishing to seek investment for the region, attract skilled talent and national / global organisations to branch out here.

Marty Adnum, Managing Director of Out of the Square, expressed his enthusiasm for the project.

"We are incredibly proud of the 'Region Ready' initiative and the positive awareness it generates for the community and organisations at all levels. We tried to take the Switzerland approach by showcasing a cross section of attributes, putting aside individual needs to lift the region as a whole. By showcasing the region in this user-friendly way, we aim to foster regional pride and inspire further innovation, investment and collaboration."

The 'Region Ready' project serves as a vital free resource for local businesses, investors, and community members, providing them with insights into the region's potential and the remarkable achievements of its industries and organisations. The new website



Marty Adnum (Founder & Managing Director) & Adam Stephens (Camera & Editor) of Out of the Square Media

is designed to be a hub of information, offering easy access to project details, videos, and downloadable content.

"With the launch of the new website, we're making it as easy as possible for people to explore and engage with the Hunter region's capabilities," said Marty.

"The OOTS team at all levels have been involved in this project, with our skills in video, web and design bringing to life a true passion project for the greater good".

Out of the Square invites the community, business leaders, and media representatives to visit regionready.com.au. The project is a celebration of the Hunter region's present, and future, and a call to action for everyone to be part of its continued success.

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Construction begins on iconic Lake Macquarie landmark

The highly anticipated construction of Awaba House is underway, marking a significant milestone in the preservation of a cherished Hunter heritage site.

Lake Macquarie City Council Manager Property Business Development Elizabeth Lambert said the 19th century gem, nestled on the lake's shore in Booragul, had long been a symbol of community pride and cultural heritage.

"We're thrilled to see the building rise from the ashes after it was badly damaged by fire in 2019," she said.

"While the historic facade will be maintained, the revitalisation will blend historic charm with a contemporary flair, promising an unparalleled dining experience for the Hunter."

Once complete, the \$6 million build will boast an improved dining area with a modern kitchen and bar facilities. The revitalisation will also include construction of a dedicated space for weddings and events, featuring expansive outdoor terraces overlooking the lake.

BKA Architecture Designer Allison Burrows said Awaba House was a rare gem.

"As a Lake Macquarie local, I was very drawn to this project," she said.

"Awaba House stood out to me as a unique project because it combines amazing heritage with modern architecture, which can be absolutely beautiful in unison."

"We've created a building that sings to its past and exemplifies an exciting future through a succinct, simple and elegant design."

Australian company Baseline Projects will oversee the project, expected to be complete by late 2025.

SHAC part of architectural team to deliver high-speed rail business case

A statement from Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Catherine King, said delivering a business case for the proposed Sydney to Newcastle high-speed rail was "critical to the success of this project and getting it right from the start will be of enormous benefit to the Australian economy".

The High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) took an important step towards delivery of high-speed rail in Australia, with the Australian Government allocating \$78.8 million earlier this year to deliver the initial Sydney to Newcastle high speed rail business case.

Delivering high speed rail between Sydney and Newcastle is seen as a crucial waypoint towards the Australian Government's commitment to build a high-speed rail network on Australia's east coast.

In its first Budget the Albanese Government committed \$500 million to the early stages of developing high-speed rail, including business case works.

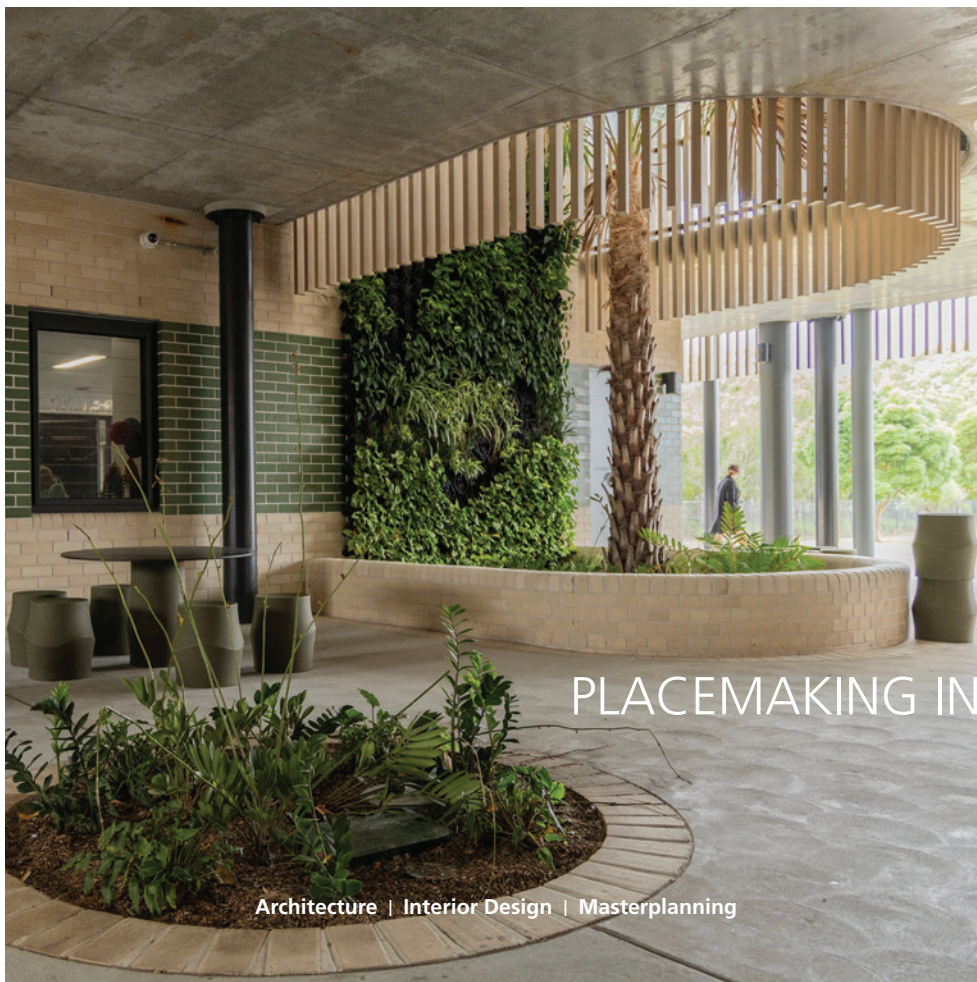
Hunter company SHAC is exceptionally proud to be representing the Hunter as part of the Weston Williamson + Partners hand-picked international architectural team delivering the Business Case for the First Stage of High Speed Rail for the Commonwealth of Australia's High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA).

SHAC Managing Director Justin Hamilton said "It's certainly well earned by everyone here at the SHAC team, and has the office buzzing with excitement for the future of Newcastle and the Hunter, it comes from over 2 decades of locally based design quality thinking and pragmatic delivery helping our trusted clients to create valued places to live, work, play and learn."



The Albanese Government has committed \$500 million to developing a High Speed Rail link between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, with Stage One being the Sydney to Newcastle Service which will secure enormous benefit to the Australian and Hunter economies.

The WW+P and SHAC team are part of an exciting Joint Venture "Catalyst HSR" powered by WSP and Arcadis; and supported by highly skilled global specialist partners including Weston Williamson + Partners, Arcadia, Maynard, Urbis, SHAC, Ineco, Amberg Engineering, Etheus, MRR Consulting, ArchArtifex, Alta and The University of Newcastle.



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City of Newcastle secures \$1 million to roll out innovative development assessment process

A groundbreaking planning tool designed by City of Newcastle, which has slashed determination times for simple developments by more than 75% will be rolled out across two Hunter councils.

City of Newcastle will leverage a \$1 million Federal grant to integrate and expand its award-winning Accelerated Development Application (ADA) system across Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook Shire Councils as part of a memoranda of understanding with its Hunter neighbours.

Since being introduced by Newcastle in 2022, the system has reduced the average assessment of low-impact, decision-ready development applications to seven days, down from the previous average of 40.

It has also helped cut Newcastle's overall processing times by 30%.

Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said the three-council accord will springboard the acclaimed ADA into more efficient approvals for low-risk developments.

"This is a significant achievement that means our hard work and expertise is set to benefit our colleagues at Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook shire and ultimately more people across the Hunter," Cr Nelmes said.

"I'm delighted that the vision of our staff is being recognised through this federal grant and I'm proud that City of Newcastle is leading and collaborating through this first-of-its-kind system, which is setting a benchmark for other councils across NSW.

"By expanding the ADA program across the Hunter, we will help increase the planning capability and housing delivery in the region."

The councils jointly secured the grant through the Australian Government's Housing Support Program, part of the National Housing Accord target of 1.2 million new homes.

The system will be rolled out to Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook

councils by City of Newcastle through training, support, shared expertise and mentoring. City of Newcastle will also lead analysis and expansion of ADA, with input from the development sector, key stakeholders and artificial intelligence, to capture and speed up a greater share of applications.

The three councils will then collaborate to finetune the expanded ADA on an ongoing basis.

The ADA system has proven highly effective at slashing red tape around the hundreds of simple, decision-ready development applications made to City of Newcastle each year.

The higher efficiency frees council resources for more complex DAs, increasing capacity for merit assessment and responding to site constraints.

The system also improves the quality of information lodged and uses an eligibility checker to quickly determine if an application can be assessed through ADA. In the most recent financial year, ADA determinations accounted for 27% of all applications determined by City of Newcastle.

City of Newcastle's ADA pathway covers 10 types of developments. Most applications determined are residential, including alterations and additions, single dwellings and secondary dwellings.

Heal Urgent Care launches innovative return to work service

Heal Specialist Urgent Care has reimaged how the complexities of return to work are managed with the launch of the Work Health Hub. This new and innovative solution to caring for injured workers has seen an explosion in demand from local businesses wanting to access the new service.

Heal CEO Dr Tim Stewart is an experienced emergency physician who has seen firsthand the difficulties businesses face in getting their workers back to work in a safe and timely way. From lengthy waits for emergency care and specialist appointments, to a lack of understanding of available light duties and options for returning to work.

"When Heal opened, I learned very quickly that businesses wanted an alternative to going to hospital with an injured worker," Dr Stewart said.

"In fact, the return to work medical pathway was so clunky and inefficient, that people wanted to come back to Heal for all of their follow up care too. That was when the seed was planted that there is a much better way to deliver return to work services."

In a first for Australia, an injured worker can access immediate medical treatment by the highly skilled emergency team at Heal clinics in Newcastle or Maitland, and have follow up and allied health services available to them onsite at Heal through the Work Health Hub.

"We have created a comprehensive solution that looks after an injured worker from the day of injury through to complete healing," Dr Stewart says.

"Our team makes all necessary appointments through the Work Health Hub, tapping into our network of health partners."

"Businesses are telling us that their workers are happier and have the confidence to return to work when they are looked after at Heal."



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Hunter Water kicks off remediation work to transform the Williams River

Hunter Water has commenced significant remediation efforts to help protect the eroding river banks of the Williams River, spanning from Seaham to Clarence Town. This essential work will help prevent further erosion and enhance water quality, ensuring a sustainable future for the river and its surrounding communities.

Hunter Water Executive Manager Customer Delivery, Glen Robinson, recognises the immense value the river holds, saying Hunter Water is taking the essential and necessary steps to ensure it remains a valuable resource for the community.

"The Williams River is an important asset to our community, and its preservation is crucial for both local ecosystems and our water supply. It is a vital component in supplying drinking water to over half a million people in the Lower Hunter, with around half of the water in Grahamstown Dam being pumped from this river system.

"Future population growth and the impacts of climate change mean the Lower Hunter needs a resilient and reliable drinking water supply from the Williams River to ensure the long-term sustainability of the region. Phase one of the package of work kicked off in August, with several riverfront landowners committing to the remediation efforts on their properties," Mr Robinson said.

The remediation work will involve the use of engineered rock and log structures for severely eroded stretches, bank revegetation, weed removal, and the installation of stock management fencing. To ensure safety, temporary boating restrictions will be in place between Clarence Town and Seaham during the work. This will include temporary exclusion areas and no-wash zones within the wakeboarding area, with river users encouraged to follow the directions provided by signs, markers, and buoys.

This project was coordinated in collaboration with several government agencies through the development of the Erosion Management Plan for the Seaham Weir Pool. The partnership includes Hunter Water, Transport for NSW, Hunter Local Land Services, DPI-Fisheries, and the Port Stephens and Dungog Shire councils.

Hunter Water Group Manager Planning and Engineering and Chair of the Seaham Weir Pool Interagency Working Group, Rob Main, acknowledges the planning and leadership from these agencies in ensuring the program's effectiveness.

"Our collaborative approach with various government agencies and landholders underscores the importance of this work. We are committed to implementing effective solutions that will provide lasting environmental and community benefits.

"We appreciate the support of local landholders and river users as we undertake this vital work. Together, we can ensure the Williams River remains a thriving and sustainable resource for future generations," Mr Main said.



Williams River spanning from Seaham to Clarence Town

Japanese university opens first offshore campus in the Hunter

Nihon University's Newcastle campus has been officially opened, signifying a significant academic partnership between Australia and Japan.

The campus is located at the former Newcastle Courthouse in Church Street. Nihon University purchased the property in 2016 for \$6.6 million which then underwent a \$49 million transformation, with two new four-storey buildings, including classrooms, a residential building, and a cafeteria for Japanese students to study abroad.

The works were basically finished in 2021 but the official opening was delayed until the Japanese Government changed its policy of discouraging university students from travelling overseas due to COVID.

The Nihon University Newcastle Campus is the first overseas campus for the university, originally founded in 1889 by Japan's first Justice Minister Yamada Akiyoshi.

Nihon University and the University of Newcastle also signed an agreement in February to support operations of the new Nihon University Campus.

Almost one in five employees state their work often triggers mental health challenges, yet nearly nine in ten managers' report they are satisfied with their organisation's ability to create psychologically healthy workplaces for workers, according to a recent study by Allianz.

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\$2.6 million Sports Amenities Building opens at Yulong Oval

Local sporting clubs and the wider Medowie community are celebrating the official opening of a new state-of-the-art amenities building at Yulong Oval.

Designed in consultation with Port Hunter Touch Football, Medowie Football Club, and Medowie Cricket Club, the \$2.6 million facility features modern amenities to cater to the growing needs of these local sporting groups.

Port Stephens Councillor Chris Doohan is passionate about ensuring there are facilities available to keep the community active.

"With new unisex toilets, an accessible toilet, change rooms, a kiosk, storage, and a dedicated space for referees and first aid, the new amenities building will support increased participation in sports for both men and women," Cnr Doohan said.

Councillor Jason Wells, a strong advocate for youth sports development, called the new facility a game-changer for Medowie.

"Being involved in local sport in Medowie myself, I know how valuable a facility like this is – it's a huge win for the entire community," Cnr Wells said.

Medowie Football Club President Eric Dorn shared the club's excitement about the new building.

"We're thrilled to have these upgraded facilities for our members and the community," Mr Dorn said.

"With these new amenities, we look forward to hosting even larger local and state-wide sporting carnivals," he added.

The project was possible thanks to funding from the NSW Government's Regional Sport Facility Fund, NSW Club Grant scheme, Stronger Communities Fund, and developer contributions.

University of Newcastle approved for Health Education and Research Building transformation

The University of Newcastle is set to embark on refurbishment works at the Health Education Research Building at Callaghan Campus, with the green light given on the project's Development Application.

This milestone paves the way for enhanced educational and research facilities at the University. The refurbishment will provide cutting-edge simulation labs and modern teaching spaces for health studies, giving students and staff access to the latest technology.

Most importantly, the project will see key University health disciplines brought together within the building, creating greater opportunities for collaboration and innovation; and connecting students across Health, Medicine and Wellbeing disciplines.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky, AO said the project is a pivotal investment in the learning experience for health studies students and staff, promising to enhance the future of the region's healthcare industry.

"Our School of Nursing and Midwifery provides the highest number of nurses and midwives to hospitals and health facilities across the Hunter, New England and Central Coast regions", Professor Zelinsky said.

"This refurbishment work will transform the learning experience for our students, equipping them with essential skills that will serve as valuable tools as they navigate practical placements and transition into the workforce.

"Simulation labs are controlled interactive spaces which replicate real-life patient care scenarios to allow our future nurses and midwives to hone their clinical skills and prepare for clinical settings.

"Extensive preparation works have already occurred to prepare the site for construction and are now complete. This enables the main refurbishment works to start in the coming months.

"Our project team has been working directly with all staff and students who currently research, work, or attend classes in the building to ensure they are across the project's stages during and after construction," Professor Zelinsky said.

Procurement of the construction contractor for this project is ongoing and is expected to be awarded soon.

The project is anticipated to be completed by mid-2025.



Concept image: Health Education Research Building Midwifery Simulation Lab
Image credit: EJE

New and improved Broke Recreation Ground

Broke Recreation Ground has been transformed with all-new courts, lighting and amenities that are sure to be a hit in the community's bicentennial year.

Singleton Council has completed a \$750,000 project to reconstruct community asset to turn it into a modern sport and recreation facility that will support the health and wellbeing of the village for years to come.

The project has been funded by the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund and a Severe Weather and Flood grant.

Katie Hardy, Council's Acting Director Infrastructure and Planning, said the much-needed improvements to this well-used community asset could not have come at a better time.

"This has been a fantastic project to deliver to the people of Broke as we celebrate its bicentenary, and one we're sure will be a slam dunk for residents and visitors looking to enjoy what the village has to offer," she said.

"The improvements to this important sport and recreation space, made in consultation with the community, were much needed.

"The asphalt courts had been significantly impacted by wet weather and severe flooding events, and the amenities were no longer fit for purpose.

"We've replaced the court surfaces, added an extra tennis court and practice wall, and transformed the former netball court into a multipurpose one suitable for netball and basketball.

"The amenities block has been demolished and replaced with a new barbecue and seating area and the previously coin operated lights have been upgraded to a LED system that can be hired at night with a mobile phone app, making the facility easier than ever to access.

"So, whether you want to come and have a hit of tennis, shoot some hoops or have a barbecue with friends and family, Broke Recreation Ground is the ideal place to do it."

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HJO joins Newcastle Airport to celebrate International Terminal construction milestones

Newcastle Airport's terminal expansion is progressing rapidly with the crown of the building, a vaulted roof and structural steel installations the current work focus. Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO), hosted by Newcastle Airport's CEO Dr. Peter Cock, received a behind-the-scenes sneak preview of progress to date with a tour of the construction site on 8 August.

Dr. Peter Cock hosted HJO Chair Cr. Sue Moore (Mayor of Singleton) and representatives from HJO, including Mayors and General Managers from 10 regional councils, Office of Local Government, and Regional NSW, who visited the terminal expansion construction site celebrating key completion milestones.

Dr. Peter Cock said it was exciting to see the superstructure taking shape on this iconic building and was looking forward to seeing it come alive next year.

"I want to thank the Federal Government for critical funding support and HJO for their unwavering alignment and advocacy of this important initiative for the greater Hunter Region," Dr. Cock said.

"Our terminal expansion project will transform the region's aviation landscape, connect Hunter passengers to the world and significantly open global trade and freight opportunities."

On track for completion mid-2025, the terminal expansion is a critical step towards achieving Newcastle Airport's aim to be the airport the region deserves. With the terminal concrete structure almost complete, the immediate focus is on the structural steel installation and impressive vaulted roof.

Previously a significant amount of work has been completed on key structural and underground baggage tunnels and now we are moving towards lockup stage with doors, windows and glass facade by the end of the year.

Upcoming work will include wall and partition fit outs, Border Agency offices and the installation of a glass building façade allowing natural light to flow through the building and enabling impressive views of the runway.

Electrical works are also commencing in the electrical substation which powers the facility and will activate the 1236 new solar panels in the Premium Car Park, fulfilling over 30 per cent of the airport's future energy needs.

The Hunter Joint Organisation Chairperson, Singleton Mayor Cr. Sue Moore, outlined the grand vision for the Hunter, saying, "We're aiming for the Hunter to be a globally connected and economically thriving city-region, serving as an international gateway while providing its communities with a vibrant and unique lifestyle."

Recognising the national significance of the terminal expansion project, the Australian Government committed \$55 million for the new terminal and an additional \$66 million towards strengthening the runway to accommodate long range civilian aircraft, which will support the vital aviation infrastructure, grow tourism and transition the airport to a world-class facility connecting the Hunter with the rest of the world.



BUSINESS ANNIVERSARIES

Maroba

Maroba has recently celebrated 70 years of providing aged care to the Hunter. The organisation started with Viv Cork who had a dream to bring about change in the aged care system to provide dignity to older people in care. In 1954 Viv and two other members of the Maitland Road Baptist Church mortgaged their homes to purchase a 10 bedroom maternity hospital in Buruda Street, Mayfield and re-named it Maroba Rest Home for Elderly Ladies. 70 years later Maroba is a recognised, award winning leader in residential aged care and retirement accommodation as well as a provider of wellness and support services for the community.



Port Authority of NSW

Port Authority of NSW is celebrating 10 years as a State-Owned Corporation, and in Newcastle that decade has seen its operations facilitate a staggering \$258 billion in trade for the Hunter region and state economy. Over the last 10 years, Port Authority has ensured the safe navigation of over 22,000 commercial vessels through Newcastle harbour, facilitating the movement of 1.6 billion tonnes of cargo. The decade ahead is shaping up to be equally successful and Port Authority will continue to facilitate the region's trade while working on how to support greater benefits to the region by investing in cutting edge technology, training and new opportunities.



**Is your business celebrating a major anniversary?
We would like to hear from you if you are marking
5, 10, 15, 20, 25 years etc.
Email us at garry@HBRmag.com.au for further information.**

PROPERTY INVESTMENT GURU BRYCE HOLDAWAY CELEBRATES LEAH JAY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Leah Jay is marking a significant milestone as the Newcastle and Hunter region servicing property management company celebrates its 30th anniversary. Held at Merewether Surfhouse on August 1st, the event was a memorable occasion that featured an exclusive masterclass by Bryce Holdaway, a leading figure in property investment and the co-host of popular TV programs such as ABC's 'Escape From The City' and Foxtel's 'Location, Location, Location'.

The celebration brought together Leah Jay's dedicated team of Property Managers, Team Leaders, Investment Services staff, and Business Development Managers, alongside investors and business professionals from the Newcastle and Hunter regions. The event not only commemorated three decades of Leah Jay's exceptional property management services but also offered valuable insights into property investment through Bryce Holdaway's masterclass "How to Build a Property Portfolio and Retire on \$2k Per Week in Any Market."

Bryce Holdaway and Cassandra Lantry at the 30th anniversary celebrations



Namesake and founder, Leah Jay, began her journey in 1994 as an independent property manager in Hamilton, at a time when rental management was often overshadowed by property sales. Identifying a crucial gap in the market, Leah established a dedicated property management service that set new standards in expertise and client care.

Over the past 30 years, Leah Jay has grown into a team of over 50 members, expanded its reach with offices in East Maitland, Belmont, and Newcastle CBD, and in recent years embraced innovative practices such as digital inspections and remote work systems to adapt to COVID-19 regulations. From 2019 Leah Jay has seen the expansion of new offerings within Investment Services, spearheaded by a team of industry professionals who provide full service strategies for a range of investment property ventures.

"The 30th anniversary is not just a celebration of our history but also a testament to our ongoing commitment to excellence," said Cassandra Lantry, General Manager. "We are honoured to have Bryce Holdaway join us to share his knowledge and contribute to our mission of empowering investors, offering unparalleled support to our tenants and most importantly, leading the property management industry within the Newcastle region."

Bryce Holdaway's presence as guest speaker added a special touch to the event. As a highly regarded property investment advisor, co-host of The Property Couch podcast and the owner of Empower Wealth, Holdaway's insights provided attendees with actionable strategies for growing their investment portfolios.

In addition to professional milestones, Leah Jay's contributions extend to community support, including raising significant funds for the Big Freeze and supporting Jenny's Place, a charity aiding women fleeing domestic violence. Government investment to boost Long-Range Strike for ADF and deliver jobs for Hunter Region

KNOW A GOOD OPPORTUNITY WHEN YOU SEE ONE

When it comes to Property Management, talk to the Specialists.

For 30 years we have focused solely on Property Management and are the most awarded Property Managers in NSW.

leahjay.com.au



COMING EVENTS.....

23 September 2024, 8.30am – 2.30pm

Regional Angel Investor Network

RAIN PitchFest Newcastle – Session 1

Cost: Free

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rain-pitchfest-newcastle-session-1-tickets-826219443597>

26 September 2024, 7.00am – 9.00am

Business Singleton

September 2024 Business Breakfast

Cost: Member - \$35.50 Non Member - \$42.50

https://www.stickytickets.com.au/du9am/september_2024_business_breakfast.aspx

7 October 2024, 6.00 pm – 11.30 pm

HIA

HIA-CSR Hunter Housing and Kitchen and Bathrooms Awards

Venue: NEX, Newcastle

Cost: \$240 – \$480

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/housing-awards/hunter-nsw/2024/hia-housing-awards-newcastle-oct19>

16 October 2024

Business Hunter

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-development-forum>

17 October 2024, 5.30 pm – 7.30 pm

Business Port Stephens

October Mix & Mingle

Venue: NEX, Newcastle

Cost: \$240 – \$480

<https://www.businessportstephens.com/events/#!event/2024/10/17/october-mix-mingle-save-the-date-more-details-to-come>

18 October 2024

HMA

Hunter Manufacturing Awards 2024

Venue: Nex, Newcastle

<https://www.hma.org.au/>

18 October 2024

Business Hunter

Business Infrastructure Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-infrastructure-lunch-series>

24 October 2024

Business Hunter

Business Hunter Innovation Series

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-innovation-lunch-series>

26 October 2024, 6.30 pm – 11.30 pm

HunterNet

HunterNet Future Leaders Gala Dinner

Venue: Noah's on the Beach

Cost: \$150+ General Admission

<https://events.humanitix.com/hunternet-future-leaders-gala-dinner>

31 October 2024

Business Hunter

Hunter Nexus Gala Dinner

Venue: To be announced

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

31 October 2024

Maitland Business Chamber

The MBC 2024 Small Business Summit

Venue: Maitland Town Hall

Cost: Free

<https://maitlandbusiness.com.au/event/mbc-2024-small-business-summit/>

8 November 2024

Business Hunter

Energy & Resource Lunches

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-energy-resources-lunch-series>

13 November 2024

Business Hunter

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-development-forum>

29 November 2024

Business Hunter

Business Infrastructure Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-infrastructure-lunch-series>

**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



PKF SYDNEY & NEWCASTLE

PKF Sydney and Newcastle has promoted **Jackie Marriott** to Partner. Jackie brings over a decade of expertise in the accounting industry, specialising in business advisory with a strong emphasis on strategy and improvement. She has extensive experience across various sectors, including mining, hospitality, and manufacturing, where she has provided invaluable support to both SMEs and global enterprises.



HEAL SPECIALIST AFTER CARE

Dr Bruce Raffan MBBS FRACGP has joined the Heal team to lead the innovative Work Health Hub. Dr Bruce is a seasoned occupational health expert, having managed the medical needs for a number of large local councils over many years. Highly skilled in both injury management and return to work requirements, Dr Bruce is a valued addition to the Heal team



PROSPERITY ADVISERS GROUP

Prosperity Advisers Group has appointed **Tony Nimac** as a Senior Consultant and Strategic Advisor based in its Sydney office. With over 30 years of experience as a KPMG Australia Partner and Board member, Tony brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise. Tony notably led KPMG's mid-market business through a significant growth phase, achieving rapid expansion through market focus, strategic partner recruitment, internal promotions, and acquisitions. Tony has worked with leading Australian growth companies and entrepreneurs, helping them to scale locally and globally.



AUST. AIRPORTS ASSOC.

Head of Newcastle Airport Security and Operational Resilience, **Paul McFarlane** has been appointed as Divisional Chair of the Australian Airports Association (AAA) NSW/ACT. The AAA is the national voice representing the interests of more than 340 airports, and aerodromes Australia wide. With a wealth of experience in the aviation industry spanning almost 20 years. Mr McFarlane has worked at Newcastle Airport in a senior management capacity since November 2020, when he commenced as Manager of Operations.

LET US
KNOW ABOUT
YOUR
PEOPLE!



PKF SYDNEY & NEWCASTLE

Trent Ruprecht has been promoted to Partner at PKF Sydney and Newcastle. Trent is highly regarded for being a specialist pharmacy accountant and business advisor and has been with PKF for over 18 years, where he commenced his career as a trainee accountant. Trent has extensive experience in retail and business growth strategies, including the buying and selling of pharmacies, pharmacy valuations, cash flow forecasting, budgeting, and business structuring.

We would be pleased to receive information about your new appointments.

Just email around 80 words on the employment plus a high resolution head shot to **editorial@HBRmag.com.au**

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



How can workplaces benefit from the '15-minute city' concept?

The concept of the 15-minute city was developed by urban scientist and researcher Carlos Moreno. There are many benefits to people if they can live within 15 minutes of work, shops, healthcare, entertainment and other daily services. Workplace design and fit-out company Evoke Projects explores how the concept can help businesses, even if the 15-minute city is not part of your local government plans.

What are the benefits of the 15-minute city?

Benefits to people:

- Less time spent commuting
- Reduced stress
- Better quality of life
- Improved physical health because people are more likely to walk and cycle
- Easier access to recreation and exercise facilities
- Better well-being
- Community engagement.

Benefits to businesses:

- Higher productivity and motivation from staff enjoying the above benefits
- Reduced real estate / lease costs as building use is shared and optimised with day / evening use
- Opens up access to skilled people who do not live within commuting distance
- Loyalty and retention
- Stronger local economies because people are around to spend money
- Revitalised local areas attracting more customers
- Flexibility to adapt to change when not located in one building.

Benefits to the environment:

- Lower emissions from car use
- Improved air quality
- Prioritised green spaces for community use.

How can businesses use the concept if it's not part of local government planning?

In an ideal world, the local government area will be planning a 15-minute city because the benefits to people, businesses and the environment are so strong. This makes life a whole lot easier for businesses who can effectively piggyback on the work already under way. However, even if that's not the case, the concept holds true. People love convenience. They will be drawn to workplaces where their lives are easier.

Quite simply, an employer that provides easy access to daily services and needs will have the pick of talent.

What conveniences can employers consider?

Surveying your workers will allow you to focus your efforts on services that will give your business the best return on investment. Find out what is important to people. The workplace design team at Evoke Projects can help you refurbish your business to incorporate many of the ideas below.

Catering – While most offices offer kitchen facilities, they are often purely functional, such as a fridge, kettle and microwave. Employees need to bring all their own food. Larger businesses could consider an on-site café. Smaller businesses could share the cost with other tenants or organise mobile food trucks. Provision of basic foods like fruit, bread, butter, cheese and salad would also make the work kitchen feel more like home.



Dry cleaning / laundry / barber / beauty / massage / snack services – Support other local businesses by allowing them to provide services your employees want on site. This can be done without disruption to work tasks with regular scheduling, including before and after work. If someone can go straight from their desk at the end of the day and into a meeting room for a hair trim or manicure, they are saving travel time and feel happier about their workplace experience.

Fitness classes, personal training or a multi-gym – A real time-saver if fitness can be improved at the office! Even more importantly, you will have a healthier team.

Childcare – An on-site creche will be invaluable to working parents with young children.

Education and self-development – Find out what employees want. You could arrange courses in nutrition, mindfulness, gardening, budgeting or learning a new language. Focus on non-work subjects for recreation and fun.

End of trip facilities – Provide convenience for people who walk or cycle to the office. Showers, lockers, bicycle racks, mirrors, hairdryers, hair straighteners, iron, ironing board and toiletries will be welcomed.

As you can see, there are many ways you can incorporate the concept of the 15-minute city into your workplace. To discuss workplace design and fit-outs to support this concept, please call Evoke Projects on 1300 720 692.

Harnessing migration: A strategic solution for businesses to overcome skill shortages

Ndi Ruppert
Ruppert Legal Pty Ltd

Following a comprehensive review of Australia's Migration System in 2023, it was concluded that the system was in such disrepair that it required a decade-long overhaul. The existing system was failing workers, businesses, and the broader Australian population. In response, the Migration Strategy was introduced, aimed at fostering positive outcomes for both businesses and workers, whether local or migrant. This strategy is designed to help businesses secure the skills they need to grow and enhance productivity.

One of the key actions within the Migration Strategy is to prioritise visa processing for regional Australia, ensuring that businesses in these areas can more easily fill skill shortages through migration. This prioritisation is particularly beneficial for businesses that have struggled to find qualified workers within the local labour market.

Ruppert Legal has advised numerous employers in mining, engineering and primary industries here in the Hunter, as well as the Far North Coast, and major metropolitan centres, regarding Business Sponsorship and visas for attracting skilled migrant workers.

For businesses that have not previously considered migration as a solution to skill shortages, the strategy introduces several incentives. These incentives are designed to make it easier, even for small businesses, to leverage migration to find suitably qualified workers. For example, a proposed reform aims to reduce the financial burden on employers by allowing them to pay the Skilling Australians Fund (SAF) levy in instalments, rather than requiring full payment upfront. The SAF levy helps ensure businesses that benefit from skilled migration also contribute to skills development for Australians and is a mandatory cost associated with sponsoring overseas employees. Therefore, the proposed flexible payment system is intended to make it more feasible for businesses to sponsor skilled workers. The change is tabled for later this year.

Additionally, starting in November 2024, the work experience requirement for the Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) visa (subclass 482) will be reduced from two years to one year, thereby broadening the labour pool available to employers. The Department of Home Affairs (the DHA) also plans to replace the TSS (subclass 482) visa with a new three-tiered Skills in Demand visa. This new visa will enable employers to sponsor workers in essential skills areas that were previously ineligible for the standard skilled migration program due to the lower skill levels of the jobs.

For existing employer sponsors, it's important to be aware of the new legislation that took effect on 1 July 2024 — the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Act 2024 (Cth). This law amends the Migration Act 1958 (Cth) to establish criminal offences and associated civil penalty provisions for a person who unduly influences, pressures or coerces a non-citizen to breach a work-related condition of their visa or accept an exploitative work arrangement, and aims to improve employer compliance in relation to the treatment of visa holders.

One significant initiative under this legislation is the no-cost Workplace Justice (subclass 408) visa pilot. This visa allows exploited workers to remain in Australia for six to twelve months, with the possibility of extending up to four years, to pursue workplace justice through criminal or civil proceedings. In the new legislation, worker exploitation includes, but is not limited to, underpayment or non-payment of wages, misclassification

of workers, unlawful wage deductions, non-compliance with workplace health and safety requirements, bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

Employers found guilty of exploiting migrant workers under the Fair Work Act, or who breach their sponsorship obligations under the Migration Regulations 1994 (Cth), can face severe penalties, including being banned from hiring temporary visa holders or sponsoring skilled workers.

If you would like to explore your options and obtain legal advice relevant to your strategic goals, please contact me to discuss your specific circumstances via info@ruppertlegal.com.au.

This article does not deal with every important topic or change in law and is not intended to be relied upon as a substitute for legal or other advice that may be relevant to the reader's specific circumstances.



Ndi Ruppert is a Director of Ruppert Legal. She obtained her Bachelor of Business and Law with a Diploma of Legal Practice from the University of Newcastle in 2010 and was admitted to the Supreme Court of New South Wales as a solicitor in 2011. In 2017, Ndi obtained her Master of Laws from the University of Newcastle, majoring in Human Rights and International Business; her master thesis was published in the African Journal of International and Comparative Law.



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YOUR NEWS!**

4 0 6 2 8 1 3 3

2024 HUNTER INNOVATION FESTIVAL

Bright minds, founders, and innovative companies are set to converge on the Hunter to explore the technologies and ideas poised to disrupt industries and change the way we work and live.

The Hunter Innovation Festival, held 17 October 2024, will provide a stage for those working in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, technology, wellness at work, and more to make valuable connections and engage in discovery.

As a national innovation hotspot, the Hunter has a thriving startup ecosystem, fostered through initiatives such as the Hunter Innovation Festival.

Hunter Innovation Festival Chair, Alex Brennan said “We know that building a strong innovation ecosystem is fundamental to success. It can make or break a new business idea. The Festival was born 22 years ago out of a desire to build a community around innovation, and we’re proud to see that now flourishing here in the Hunter.”

“Innovations coming out of the Hunter are supporting Australia’s environmental, social and economic wellbeing and increasingly, the Festival is drawing participation and engagement from capital cities and interstate. Moving forward, our objective is to become a destination festival, attracting strong visitation from outside the region,” said Mr Brennan.

Mr Brennan said the Hunter was an exciting region to watch and had incredible prospects as a global innovation epicentre.

“The Hunter is a fantastic market to pilot ideas. Its industry and skills base is incredibly diverse. Our population is big enough to provide scale, yet not overwhelming. It’s within easy reach of Sydney, but offers greater affordability for businesses starting or scaling up. Looking into the near future, with plans for a dedicated container terminal at the Port, international links through Newcastle airport, and High Speed Rail, Newcastle will be hard to beat,” he said.

“Clever businesses will be alert to this opportunity and we’ll be looking to develop our program in response. The SXSW model has been incredibly successful in this regard, and the Hunter is ideally placed to develop out a similar platform,” he said.

Sponsors, partners and supporters of the Hunter Innovation Festival include 4ID Solutions, AGL, Ampcontrol, City of Newcastle, Dantia, Hall & Wilcox, the Hunter Medical Research Institute, Hunter Water, Hyperweb, the Mutual Bank, Newy Tech People, the Newcastle Herald, the NSW Government, Out of the Square, Phillips Ormonde Fitzpatrick, the Port of Newcastle, Telstra and the University of Newcastle.

Event details:

The Hunter Innovation Festival is the largest event connecting industry, innovators and start-ups to grow the Hunter economy. It includes:

- A Conference & Showcase on 17th October (Newcastle City hall)
- A week long Roadshow commencing on 21st to 25th October
- A post-event Action Summit on 31st October

For further information visit <https://hunterinnovationfestival.org>

CREATIVE PITCHES TAKE FIRST PLACE AT COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FINALS

Jake MacDonald and Zanab Malik claimed first place at the University of Newcastle’s Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) and Visualise Your Thesis (VYT) competition finals on 27 August.

Jake won the 3MT final with his presentation on the lack of representation of Aboriginal families in Australian trials of parenting programs and the development of a culturally responsive program that draws on the cultural values of Aboriginal fathers and their kids.

Zanab’s video captivated the judges with her animated explanation of her research on weight stigma in the dental profession.

University of Newcastle Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Professor Zee Upton said the Three-Minute Thesis competition is an excellent platform that highlights the level of talent among the University’s Higher Degree Research students.

“It was great to see the calibre of research that is happening across our University displayed in last night’s finals. Our Higher Degree Research candidates continue to demonstrate the ways in which they are pushing boundaries and making a true difference in their respective fields,” Professor Upton said.

This year, both finals took place during the University’s annual Higher Degree Research (HDR) Student Festival which features a range of events to showcase the excellence and innovation of the HDR cohort.

The 3MT competition is an international contest spanning more than 900 universities in over 80 countries in which HDR candidates must capture the heart of their research in only three minutes. Thirteen finalists took to the stage to compete for first place last night, with topics ranging from ethical AI in health insurance to ecofriendly pesticides.

Competitors summarised years’ worth of research and analysis into 180 seconds; covering what they are studying, how they are studying it, and why. But in the end, it was Jake, a proud Ngarabal man, that took home the \$5000 in funding towards his research on the representation of Aboriginal people in parenting programs.

“There were a lot of great presentations in this year’s competition, so I am really grateful to have been recognised among such a talented group of finalists, and I feel honoured to have such great support from my community,” Jake said.

“Healthy Dads Healthy Mob was codesigned with Aboriginal fathers and father figures in partnership with Elenor Duncan Aboriginal Services on the Central Coast of NSW. Our program has seen great results already, with families improving their health and strengthening relationships between dads and their kids,” he said.

This year was the second year that the University held the VYT competition – an international contest that challenges graduates to present their research in a 60-second, eye-catching video. This competition has quickly gained popularity, with 24 universities now competing across six countries.

Beating out the other five finalists, Zanab received first place for her video showcasing her research on obesity stigma in the dental setting, receiving \$1000 towards her research expenses.



CYBER ASSESSMENT SOFTWARE

Varley Group is an Australian family owned business with a rich heritage in engineering and manufacturing that began 138 years ago in King Street, Newcastle with their boiler-making business. Today Varley Group have their head office in Tomago, and eleven facilities across Australia. Varley Group has made a global reputation for manufacturing cutting-edge products for defence, transportation, health, rail, energy and maritime sectors.

Technological advancement and system integration is key to all that Varley Group does, and with this in mind in 2022 Varley Group acquired ICT solutions experts Frame Group and cyber software business INTROSPECTUS. This acquisition was strategic and in response to the current cyber threat landscape Australian businesses, critical infrastructure and government organisations face due to our growing reliance on technology, the persistence of hackers and the evolution of AI technology.

Each and every year, cyber-attacks on Australian organisations continue to accelerate, often resulting in financial losses, damages to a company's reputation, operational delays and customer data breaches.

Over the past three years Introspectus have been developing their new auditing software, Introspectus Assessor. This innovative software audits the baseline mitigation strategies outlined by the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) and provides real-time insight into cybersecurity risk which manual audits cannot achieve.

The ACSC have named these mitigation strategies Essential Eight, which has been mandated for government and strongly recommended for all Australian businesses. When implemented correctly, the Essential Eight reduces vulnerabilities and minimises risk against cyber-attack.

The Essential Eight strategies include: patch applications, patch operations systems, multi-factor authentication, restrict administrative privileges, application control, restrict MS Office macros, user application hardening and regular back-ups. There are three Maturity Levels in Essential Eight Implementation. Your entire environment is only as strong as your lowest level. Generally, ML1 is suitable for small to medium organisations, ML2 is the default level for government and large organisations, and ML3 is suitable for critical infrastructure providers and organisations that manage sensitive data.

The innovative software Introspectus has developed monitors every endpoint within an organisation and provides real-time assurance. It will highlight failures in controls and provides advice for remediation of gaps in your cyber security.

CEO of Varley Systems Matt Dean states, "There's no other software in the market place this advanced when it comes to the Essential Eight."

\$3 MILLION FUNDING TO RESEARCH UNEXPLAINED GUT DISEASE

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has awarded \$3 million to the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Digestive Health to continue its mission to find causes of chronic unexplained gut diseases, unlock new targets for therapies and ultimately cure disease.

Announced by Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Ged Kearney MP, the funding will enable the Centre, led by world-renowned neurogastroenterologist, University of Newcastle Distinguished Laureate Professor Nick Talley, AC, to build on its work aiming to improve quality of life for people with unexplained chronic gastrointestinal disorders.

More than one third of Australians are affected by disorders of gut-brain interaction (DGBI), which include irritable bowel syndrome, functional dyspepsia, and symptoms in inflammatory bowel disease in remission.

As the burden of gastrointestinal disorders increase in Australia, Professor Talley said the interconnectedness of the digestive and central nervous systems, often referred to as gut-brain interactions, was emerging as a key factor driving chronic and relapsing symptoms.

"DGBIs cause a very significant burden on patients including reduced quality of life and productivity, impaired mental health, and very substantial demands on health services. The economic burden of DGBIs reflect the urgent need for better diagnostic and therapeutic treatments," Professor Talley said.

The funding will support the Centre over the next five years to generate new knowledge to accelerate the translation of state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic approaches for the management of patients with DGBI.

INTROSPECTUS®

CYBER ASSESSMENT SOFTWARE

The threat of cyber-attack is a persistent and growing concern, mitigate your risk today

- Real-Time Assurance
- Board & Executive Reporting
- Holistic Viewpoint of Compliance
- Remediation Advice
- Device Specific Detail

BOOK A DEMO

Introspectus Assessor audits the security controls on all endpoints against the ACSC's Essential Eight risk mitigation strategies, and provides assurance that security controls are in place and working effectively across an organisation.

A VARLEY GROUP COMPANY

MORE INFORMATION introspectus.com.au

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ST PIUS X STUDENT WORKFORCE INITIATIVE BRINGS 'WOW' FACTOR TO PORT OF NEWCASTLE

A team of St Pius X year 10 students presented their winning Sustainnovation Challenge project to CEO Craig Carmody, Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Claydon MP, industry representatives, and Port of Newcastle employees on 29 August.

The St Pius X students' winning WoW (Women on Water) initiative aims to raise awareness and interest among young women in the maritime industry, something CEO Craig Carmody says aligns with Port of Newcastle's own goals.

"Port of Newcastle has targets in place to reach 40% women in the workforce by 2031. Student engagement and outreach programs, like the Sustainnovation Challenge, are a great way for us to unlock an emerging talent pipeline and proactively work towards these targets.

"I'm incredibly impressed by the way the St Pius X students have approached this challenge with curiosity and innovation. It was wonderful to welcome them today to come and meet many of the women on our team.

"A good organisation is made up of as many different voices and lived experiences as possible, and achieving this diversity is our focus at Port of Newcastle. We are proud to be an employer of choice for all women by Work 180, which ranks us in the top 101 Employers for Women in Australia," Mr Carmody said.

The Sustainnovation Challenge was held across the Greater Newcastle region in June, with over 70 secondary schools participating in a challenge centred on the transformation of the Port of Newcastle's role in Australia's maritime trade and emerging renewable energy sectors.

Students were tasked with creating a pitch to inspire young people across the Greater Hunter region to explore potential career pathways in the maritime industry. One of the St Pius X students, Phoebe, said that with only 5% of maritime workers being female, achieving gender equity was an urgent priority.

"Diversifying the workforce isn't just a matter of fairness, it's about unlocking a broader range of skills and perspectives that can drive innovation and progress in the industry. Our program

aims to break down these barriers and create a pathway for more women to play a vital role in the future of the Port of Newcastle," Phoebe said.

Duncan Burck, Managing Director of MCB Business Partners, the creators of the Sustainnovation Challenge program, said education and industry collaboration can be powerful, and that Port of Newcastle's support was encouraging.

"These students began with little knowledge of the port and maritime industry, but their engagement sparked both passion and a commitment to solving the challenge of workforce diversity. It's exciting to see the Port of Newcastle team eager to support and bring their WOW initiative to life," Mr Burck said.

Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Claydon MP, said, "It's wonderful to see Port of Newcastle supporting programs, like the Sustainnovation Challenge, to help increase participation and greater diversity in the maritime workforce.

"Young Novocastrians have some of the most creative and innovative approaches to solving the issues that are most important to them, and I'm incredibly impressed with what the St Pius X students have presented here today," Ms Claydon said.

"A good organisation is made up of as many different voices and lived experiences as possible, and achieving this diversity is our focus at Port of Newcastle. We are proud to be an employer of choice for all women by Work 180, which ranks us in the top 101 Employers for Women in Australia,"

Port of Newcastle CEO Craig Carmody



INNOVATION THE KEY TO HUNTER WATER'S SUCCESS WITH LIGHTWEIGHT RISER RINGS BOOSTING SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY

Hunter Water has taken a significant step towards improving workplace safety and operational efficiency by developing a new lightweight maintenance hole riser ring. This innovation marks a key milestone in the organisation's ongoing commitment to enhancing the safety and wellbeing of its employees and sustainable procurement while also optimising the delivery of essential water services.

A safer, smarter solution

Traditionally, the task of raising maintenance covers in the field has required the use of concrete riser rings, each weighing approximately 140kg. These heavy rings present substantial manual handling risks, particularly in the diverse and often challenging locations where they must be transported and fitted. Recognising the need for a safer, more practical solution, Hunter Water's Maintenance team has collaborated with local manufacturers to develop a lightweight riser ring that is both durable and approved for trial use with Hunter Water assets.

This new riser ring not only addresses the safety concerns associated with its heavier counterparts but also represents a significant achievement in local innovation. While lighter rings are available on the market, they typically need to be imported in bulk, leading to higher costs and logistical challenges. By working closely with local manufacturers, Hunter Water has been able to create a cost-effective, high-quality product that not only supports the local economy but also ensures our financial responsibility and aligns with organisational values.



Designed, developed and sealed lightweight prototype weighing 3 kg

The role of innovation at Hunter Water

For over 130 years, Hunter Water has been a trusted partner in delivering prosperity to the region, providing high-quality, affordable water services. Central to this, is a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, which is driven by the unique talents and skills of our people. Hunter Water's dedicated Continuous Improvement and Innovation program empowers employees to explore new ideas, solve complex problems, and develop practical, real-world solutions that keep the customer and community at the heart of everything they do.

For Hunter Water Continuous Improvement Lead, Andy Olrich, the riser ring project is just one of a series of important improvements the organisation has made.

"I'm passionate about working with the varied teams across Hunter Water to find solutions to challenges and to make the way we do our work more straightforward and more effective.

"It is more important than ever for organisations like Hunter Water to find smarter ways to operate. By embracing better ways of working and fostering a culture of curiosity and innovation, we are able to meet our strategic commitments, while also focusing on sustainability and the needs of the community we serve," Mr Olrich said.

Water is life

Keeping innovation flowing for a sustainable water future

Hunter Water has been a trusted partner in delivering vital services and prosperity to the Hunter Region for over 130 years.

We celebrate our rich history of collaboration and are passionate about using innovation to strengthen our region's growth.

We are here to create a sustainable future for everyone with our customers, community and water at the heart.



DERISKING R&D FOR A DECARBONISED FUTURE

Research and development (R&D) is not just a process; it is the secret sauce of innovation, the driving force behind progress, and the key to unlocking solutions to society's biggest challenges. However, recent reports reveal that R&D investment in Australia has plateaued over the past 14 years, lagging behind global leaders such as Korea, Sweden, Germany, Japan, and the USA, according to 2022 ABS data.

To address this challenge, the Australian Government's Department of Education established six national Trailblazer programs across key areas of national interest. The Trailblazer programs are one of many initiatives to assist Australia's investment in R&D and raise national technological impact and economy growth. Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy (TRaCE) program is uniquely positioned to support R&D from the lab to market and drive the nation toward a cleaner, more sustainable future.

The decline of R&D in Australia

Australia's R&D investment has been plateauing, as evidenced by recent reports from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Academy of Science. According to these reports, if investment in R&D continues to decline by 0.1% of GDP per year, Australia will be among the lowest of OECD countries. This trend is concerning, given that Australian businesses increasingly recognise climate change as a material and financial risk.

To compete on a global scale, Australia must take advantage of government initiatives designed to bolster R&D investment. These initiatives include ARENA, Australia's Economic Accelerator Grants, CSIRO's Kick-Start and Innovate to Grow for SMEs programs, along with R&D Tax Incentives. Despite these efforts, a coordinated approach is needed to reverse the decline in R&D investment and meet decarbonisation targets. Industry-University partnership can play a key role in initiating new R&D projects to develop critical technologies towards a net zero economy. The commercialisation of university-based research from the lab to market could see Australia raise its innovation output.

The Trailblazer advantage

The Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy program (TRaCE) is designed to address these challenges by fostering an ecosystem of support that bridges the gap between universities and industry. By derisking R&D, TRaCE empowers industry and research partners to collaborate effectively and develop innovative solutions in the clean energy sectors. By bringing rigorous project management and a commercial approach to R&D projects, industry partners are experiencing faster contract negotiations and outcome delivery.

Building trust and nurturing relationships

Building pathways and opportunities is one thing, but

engaging industry and university collaboration is another. TRaCE identifies opportunities for trust-building and culture change, advocating for win-win solutions between researchers and industry stakeholders. By serving as a facilitator, TRaCE promotes collaborative, solution-oriented methods that emphasise on transparency, continuous improvement in the pursuit of R&D commercialisation.

Co-designing and facilitation

Industry partners have expressed their satisfaction with the TRaCE program, highlighting its ability to transform traditional R&D models by connecting research efforts with market needs. Through co-designing R&D projects with industry partners, TRaCE ensures that innovation cycles are accelerated.

"The TRaCE team thought of every way to connect us with the researchers at the University. They looked for the connections and made them for us, and when they found this opportunity, they made it happen. In the past, it was us looking for the right researchers. Here, TRaCE were the matchmakers," said Mr Ramon Atayde, General Manager of ARC Ento Tech Ltd.

Metrics for Success

TRaCE is committed to accountability and transparency, implementing milestone metrics to track the success of R&D projects. By providing clear and measurable goals, the program ensures that projects stay on track and deliver tangible results to its industry partners.

Seizing Global Opportunities

Australia has a unique opportunity to position itself as a global energy superpower by capitalising on the circular economy, renewable energy and the critical minerals sector. TRaCE plays a key role in driving innovation and ensuring that Australia does not fall behind its global competitors.

As Australia faces the dual challenges of declining R&D investment and the urgent need to meet ambitious emission reduction targets, the TRaCE program offers a path forward. By fostering collaboration between industry and research partners, TRaCE and its five-fellow Trailblazer programs are uniquely positioned to drive innovation and create a sustainable future for Australia.

Sources:

1. [Research Note: Understanding Australia's declining R&D performance | Ai Group](#)
2. [Research and Experimental Development, Businesses, Australia, 2021-22 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)
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5. [Ramp up research or risk falling behind, event told | The Courier | Ballarat, VIC](#)
6. [CSIRO Futures released their From minerals to materials report](#)
7. [Energy: Superpower: Australia's low carbon opportunity - Ross Garnaut](#)
8. [Building an R&D strategy for modern times | McKinsey](#)
9. [Overview of the R&D Tax Incentive | business.gov.au](#)

For further information visit <https://trace.org.au/>

The TRaCE team



INNOVATIVE PRODUCT DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURING

Design Anthology (DA) has built an excellent reputation in product design, product development and manufacturing for a wide range of corporates, SMEs and entrepreneurs.

One of the recent projects was work on AusDiagnostics' HighPlex product which automates MT-PCR for laboratories with medium throughput needs.

AusDiagnostics approached DA with the objective of updating the HighPlex product to align with AusDiagnostics new design language. The primary goal was to improve the product's value proposition without compromising its key functional attributes. In addition to the brief, DA explored and implemented solutions to optimise the manufacturing, assembly, calibration, and maintenance processes, reduce costs, enhance functionality and create a platform that would enable future growth through customisation and white labelling.

Challenges and opportunities of the project included:

- Changes made could not increase the machine footprint
- No major functional changes were to be made to the operation of the machine
- Designed for manufacture, assembly, calibration, maintenance, operation & transportation
- Easily recognised as part of the AusDiagnostics product line
- Improve visibility
- Reduce manufacturing cost by 24%
- Reduced the overall number of parts by 95%
- Reduce time and complexity of assembly and calibration by 163%
- Improved the overall accuracy of the product & ability to be efficiently maintained
- Ability to customise the product for resale as an OEM product
- Consider sustainability options to reduce wastage

During the Concept Development phase, the AUSDX team was presented with three innovative concepts, each with its unique selling points, product styling, cost modelling, and manufacturing strategy. Despite this complexity, the key stakeholders were able to make a swift decision on the best course of action, thanks to the comprehensive and actionable information provided.



During the Detailed Design phase, the DA team meticulously evaluated and weighed the key risks, opportunities, and critical constraints and incorporated them into the final design. The team created and refined detailed CAD models and built numerous test rigs to validate crucial interfaces, key functionality, and product styling. This game-changing process helped the team and AUSDX to understand the design intent. It provided a platform to test the key design aspects early, capture feedback, and align key stakeholders early in the product development process. This helped avoid significant expenses and delays and ensured the final product was of the highest quality.


In the prototyping stage, the team exceeded expectations by creating a fully functional prototype that not only met product requirements but also enabled AUSDX to successfully launch the product at medical conferences in both Australia and Europe. The prototype helped validate the functional requirements, and significant efficiency improvements in assembly time, calibration, maintenance, and manufacturing costs were achieved.

In the Manufacturing Preparation stage, the team created a manufacturing-ready set of final assembly, part, and manufacturing drawings and files with all final revisions integrated and ready for production. This meticulous attention to detail ensures a seamless transition from prototype to full-scale production, allowing AUSDX to repeatably deliver a high-quality product to its customers.




From design to manufacturing and beyond, DA continues to support AusDiagnostics with its manufacturing journey from first small-scale production runs to mass manufacture DA is there to help our customers deliver products that are better than imagined in all areas of the product.



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New deal to support Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service

Mining's support for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service will stretch to just shy of 45 years under a new five-year sponsorship agreement valued at \$500,000 with the NSW Minerals Council.

The mining industry has been supporting this vital service since the mid-1980s, and it is highly valued by tens of thousands of people living in mining communities across the Hunter and, more broadly, in communities across Northern NSW.

NSW Minerals Council CEO Stephen Galilee says the long-standing partnership grows stronger every year.

"We are very proud to continue our long-term sponsorship of this important community service which will see NSW Mining extend its partnership with the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service all the way to 2029," Mr Galilee said.

"Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service flight operations and engineering personnel are highly trained professionals providing the highest level of care to people in our community when they are most in need.

"Our industry's support for this vital service has never wavered and we are tremendously grateful for the lifesaving work they do."

The mining industry's support for the Service includes contributions from individual mining companies, supplier businesses and mining-related unions, as well as from thousands of mining workers who make regular donations each week through their pay.

Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service CEO Steven Underwood said the Service was immensely grateful for the support of the NSW Minerals Council.

"Already, in 2024, the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service has undertaken more than 700 missions in support of the communities that we serve, delivering the clinical team to the patient at the point of need and ensuring that the patient is transported to where they will receive the most appropriate critical care. Our dedicated team would not be able to provide this vital aeromedical capability without the support of our valued partners like the NSW Minerals Council.

Mining is at the heart of so many regional communities covered by our Service and the strong bond between the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service and the mining industry, a bond that has developed in true partnership over decades, is deeply valued and greatly appreciated indeed," Mr Underwood said.

The new sponsorship agreement comes ahead of Mr Galilee's participation in the Leaders Leap challenge, which saw him abseil down the face of McDonald Jones Stadium on 16 August to raise funds for the Service.

"I'll admit abseiling down McDonald Jones Stadium is outside my usual comfort zone, but it's nothing compared to the courageous work that the Service does every day," Mr Galilee said.

NRL fans and mining families also had the chance to get behind the Service again at the annual Voice for Mining Family Day on 1 September, when the Newcastle Knights wore the hi-vis mining jersey against the Gold Coast Titans at McDonald Jones Stadium.

Nominations open for Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame

The Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame is aiming to add the 80th paver to the commemorative walk in the Singleton Civic Centre precinct this year, with nominations open until 4 October.

In its 15th year, the Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame recognises those individuals, organisations and families connected to Singleton by birth, education or residence who have achieved State, National or international acclaim in their field of endeavour.

Singleton Council General Manager Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr said nominations were invited in the categories of Arts, Science and Education; Community Service; Sport; Public Service; Business,

Industry and Tourism; and Meritorious Family.

"The Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame is a great way for everyone in our community to celebrate the hard work, achievements and dedication of our fellow residents and those with a strong connection to the Singleton local government area," he said.

"If you know an individual or an organisation who has achieved excellence in their particular field, or who simply goes out of their way to make life better for our community, I encourage you to put them forward and recognise their work and achievements for generations to come.

"It's simple and easy to nominate online, or Council will gladly post a paper nomination form to you."

Six new pavers were laid on the Hall of Fame in 2023, taking the total to 79. The 2023 inductees were individuals Val Smith, Anita White and Gary Holland, all in the community service category, alongside the School of Infantry (Public Service category), Singleton Service Widows Group, and Singleton Neighbourhood Centre (both Community Service category).

"The Singleton community is full of dedicated volunteers, passionate community workers, innovators and sporting heroes who elevate Singleton on the regional and national stage," Mr Fitzpatrick-Barr said.

"The Wambo Coal Hall of Fame is a wonderful partnership between Council and Wambo Coal, and I look forward to the announcement of this year's inductees taking the total number of honourees to in excess of 80."

The inductees will be announced at a special ceremony on 28 November.



Glencore operations contribute \$23.5 billion to Australia

Glencore's latest economic contribution report shows its Australian operations directly contributed \$23.5 billion to the national economy last year.

As the world moves towards a low-carbon economy, Glencore is focused on supporting the energy needs of today whilst also investing in our portfolio of transition-enabling commodities.

Glencore is one of Australia's largest producers of coal, cobalt, zinc, lead, silver, copper and nickel. They operate 22 mines across Australia as well as several metals processing facilities including concentrators, smelters, and refineries.

The Australian mining sector continues to drive our national economic prosperity and Glencore is proud to be a part of that effort.

Glencore's 2023 economic report highlights included:

- Providing jobs for 17,460 employees and contractors
- Spending \$12.9 billion on goods and services
- Supporting 7,000 Australian-based businesses
- Paying \$2.4 billion in wages and salaries
- Paying \$8.2 billion in taxes, royalties and rates to federal, state, territory, and local governments



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NCIG Secures Net Zero Future with Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA)

Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) announced a significant step towards achieving Net Zero operational emissions by signing a 10-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with a leader in renewable energy generation.

This PPA supports the development of a solar farm in the Upper Hunter region. It will supply NCIG with enough clean energy to power its Kooragang Island facility entirely from renewable sources from 2030 onwards.

The announcement follows NCIG's recently released Net Zero Transition Plan, which outlines a clear path towards achieving Net Zero operational emissions by 2030. This PPA is a major milestone in this ambitious plan.

The PPA allows NCIG to shift from relying on incremental progress through the ongoing purchase of Large-Generation Certificates (LGCs) to a robust investment structured to support attaining Net Zero operational emissions by 2030.

"We've been diligently evolving our sustainability practices for the past eight years," said NCIG CEO Aaron Johansen.

"While we've successfully met our energy offset commitments using LGCs for the past three years, we wanted to meet our future commitment by securing long-term renewable energy supply and supporting new infrastructure investment in our region."

Currently, NCIG uses approximately 80 GWh of electricity annually, sourced from the national grid and partially offset using LGCs. In FY24, NCIG purchased and retired enough LGCs to account for 30% of energy use, amounting to approximately 24 GWh.

"This partnership not only ensures we reach our Net Zero operational emissions goal by 2030, but it also paves the way for other local businesses to embrace a sustainable future and allows us to secure long-term pricing for our energy," added Johansen.



NCIG acknowledges the inherent development uncertainties associated with executing an agreement with a prospective development. However, the potential rewards—achieving Net Zero operational emissions by 2030, creating local jobs, and growing the renewable energy supply pool—far outweigh these uncertainties.

This agreement marks a significant step forward for NCIG's sustainability journey. By embracing renewable energy and partnering for positive change, NCIG is securing a cleaner future for its operations and the Hunter region.



Origin approves second stage of Eraring battery

Origin Energy (Origin) has approved the second stage development of a large-scale battery at Eraring Power Station, committing to invest approximately \$450 million, as the company continues to execute its strategy to accelerate renewable energy and storage in its portfolio.

The second stage of the Eraring battery will add a 240 MW / 1030 MWh four-hour duration grid-forming battery to the 460 MW / 1073 MWh two-hour duration first stage battery development already under construction at the site and anticipated to come online at the end of the 2025 calendar year. The combined energy storage of the stage one and stage two batteries will be over 2 GWh, enabling Origin to help keep the grid stable and support more variable renewable energy coming into the system.

Origin has executed agreements for equipment supply and construction, with works on the second stage scheduled to begin early in the 2025 calendar year. Stage two is anticipated to come online in the first quarter of the 2027 calendar year.

Leading an empowered culture of safety: NCIG's award-winning Safety Culture Score

Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) was recently awarded the Safety Excellence Award at the NSW Mining HSEC Conference. This accolade recognises NCIG's development and implementation of the Safety Culture Score (SCS), an innovative tool designed in-house to proactively enhance safety performance.

In response to the limitations of traditional lag indicators, NCIG introduced the SCS, which integrates lead safety indicators across four critical dimensions: Environment, Practices, People, and Leadership. This comprehensive approach has significantly improved safety transparency, accountability, and decision-making processes within the organisation.

Lauren Ross, Manager of People and Culture at NCIG, commented, "The development of the Safety Culture Score represents a significant shift from reactive to proactive safety measures. This advancement sets a new standard for safety performance reporting and empowers our team to take control of safety outcomes and proactively address hazards."

The impact of the SCS has been notable. Between FY21-23, NCIG observed a 10% increase in the Safety Culture Score, accompanied by a 34% reduction in total incidents and a 50% decrease in recorded injuries.

NCIG's revolutionary Safety Culture Score has applicability for all of industry. If you're interested to know more, you can contact the team at NCIG through enquiries@ncig.com.au.

Origin's head of energy supply and operations, Greg Jarvis said, "We are pleased to have approved Origin's third investment in a large-scale battery at one of our existing power stations, which reflects our belief that storage will play an important role in the changing grid by helping to firm up variable supply from wind and solar."

"The second stage of the Eraring battery will be over four-hours duration and it will be capable of absorbing excess solar generation during the day to support reliable energy supply when needed, such as through the evening peak."

"Eraring is a strategic site with high quality connection infrastructure. Confirmation of the second stage of the Eraring battery development is a key next step as we look to transform the site for the future so it can continue to support the energy transition," Mr Jarvis said.

Battery equipment for stage two of the Eraring project will be supplied by Finnish technology group Wärtsilä, with design and construction services to be provided by Enerven Energy Infrastructure (Enerven).

Origin has now committed to more than 1.5 GW of large-scale batteries across its three owned projects at Eraring and Mortlake, along with tolling agreements for the offtake of the Supernode battery stage 1 and 2.

Eraring is Australia's largest power station and supplies up to a quarter of electricity supply in New South Wales. Eraring is scheduled to close in August 2027, as part of an agreement with the NSW Government to support security of supply through the transition and while there remains uncertainty regarding the timing of transmission, renewables and firming infrastructure coming online.



Port Waratah supporting those experiencing homelessness

During August, Port Waratah assisted people experiencing homelessness and support services in the region in two ways – one symbolic and one substantive.

From 5 August until 21 August, the Port Waratah Carrington Shiploaders were illuminated in purple light in recognition of National Homelessness Awareness Week and help to raise community awareness.

Port Waratah is also the principal Event Sponsor of this year’s Hunter Homeless Connect Day partnering with community provider Hunter Homeless Connect Inc. supporting local people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Hunter Homeless Connect Day was held on 21 August at the Newcastle Entertainment Centre. It’s an annual event that links vulnerable people to vital services such as accommodation and housing providers, health and wellbeing, legal and financial assistance, employment, study and general support in a caring and dignified environment.

Port Waratah has been supporting the event for the last eight years. Port Waratah CEO, Hennie du Plooy said Port Waratah was pleased to lend its support again to help raise awareness and provide access to services for those in need.

“This is a significant social issue for our community. It’s important to do our part to raise the profile during National Homelessness Awareness Week and contribute to the support of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness in our city in a meaningful way,” Mr du Plooy said.

“We are proud to partner with Hunter Homeless Connect to ensure this crucial community event is a success and that those in difficult circumstances can easily access services and support they need.

“Our team will be there volunteering on the day cooking a BBQ ensuring no one goes hungry on the day with a steady supply of breakfast and lunch rolls. The team repeatedly remark on the



rewarding feeling of being directly involved in giving back to our community.”

Michelle Faithfull, of Home in Place, is the coordinator of Hunter Homeless Connect Day.

“The need for emergency and social housing has increased significantly over the last few years through the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living and housing increases, and surges in domestic and family violence,” Ms Faithfull said.

“Homelessness is not just living on the streets. Rough sleeping constitutes around 7% of people experiencing homelessness. It also includes people who are living in their cars, couch surfing with friends and family, staying in refuges, boarding houses and insecure and temporary, emergency housing.

“We can never get the whole scale of the issue in our area because many go under the radar. Hunter Homeless Connect Day helps people access all of the services they need under the one roof and provides a unique and very important opportunity for services to collaborate with their support.

“This event can’t happen without the sponsors, like Port Waratah, and the services and volunteers that foster a culture of wellbeing and social connectedness for guests and encouraging a sense of being valued as a member of the community.”

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Aliva 101 concrete spray head

Australian Drilling Attachments (ADA) is now the distributor for the Aliva 101 Spray Head with an innovative built-in dynamo which eliminates the need for an external power supply. Now, when spraying concrete on walls or providing shotcrete excavation, support is easier than ever, removing the risk from manual handling and repetitive strain. With its quick connect and straightforward assembly on various machines like excavators and telehandlers, the quick connect spray head is incredibly versatile.

Aliva concrete spraying equipment meets all your shotcrete concrete needs in mining, tunnelling, or construction. Precision designed for specific concrete spraying needs, ensuring optimal performance in their dedicated area – from the complexities of repairing cracked concrete to slope stabilisation and underground tunnelling.

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- enhanced labour safety
- enhanced productivity
- no need for scaffolding or scissor lifts for spraying

Singleton community groups urged to apply for funding

Community groups in the Singleton region with projects or ideas that make a positive difference to the local community are being encouraged to apply for funding in the next round of Mount Thorley Warkworth's Community Support Program.

The 2025 Community Support Program is funded by Yancoal Australia and provides financial assistance to local groups working in the areas of health, community, environment, arts, culture, education and training.

Mount Thorley Warkworth General Manager Cris Shadbolt is encouraging locals to apply for funding.

"Our Community Support Program gives us the opportunity to assist locally focused programs and initiatives capable of making a real contribution to the continued growth and sustainability of the region.

"A previously successful organisation is the Singleton Junior Rugby Union Club. With funding support from us, they were able to purchase several new pieces of training gear including tackle pads, tackle mats, tackle bag, speed sled and hit shields. We were pleased our donation could enhance the resources at the club for the safety of the rugby union players in our community.

"In the past, we have also donated to the Singleton Amateur Swimming Club so they could build a new storage shed to store the big bulky lane ropes, BBQs, chairs, marquees, and tables, ensuring they are all easily accessible during race meets.

"These are just two examples of some of the amazing projects that have been supported by our program, which will be enjoyed by many people in our community for years to come.

"If you have a project or idea that has the potential to benefit others in the Singleton region, we encourage you to apply now," said Cris.


The program is open for applications until 27 September 2024.


For more information or for an application visit www.mtwcoal.com.au/page/community



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Two guys decide to go ice fishing. They set up their gear, cut a hole in the ice, and start fishing. Suddenly, a voice booms from above: "There are no fish under the ice." They look around, but they don't see anyone. They move to another spot, cut a hole, and try again. The voice says, "There are no fish under the ice." Spooked, they look around again. One of them nervously asks, "Is that you, God?" The voice replies, "No, it's the ice rink manager."

A man goes to visit his friend in his apartment and is amazed by a brass gong in the living room. He asks, "What's that for?" His friend says, "That's my talking clock." The man is curious, so his friend grabs a mallet and hits the gong. A voice from the next apartment shouts, "Stop that noise. It's 2 am, you idiot!"

An old man is walking through the woods and hears a voice calling him. He looks down and sees a frog. The frog says, "If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess." The man picks up the frog and puts it in his pocket. The frog says, "Hey! Didn't you hear me? I said if you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess." The man says, "Sure, but at my age, I'd rather have a talking frog."

A wife texts her husband on a cold winter morning, "Windows frozen, won't open."

The husband texts back, "Gently pour some lukewarm water over it and tap the edges with a hammer." The wife texts back a few minutes later, "Computer really messed up now."

An angel appears in a dramatic puff of smoke, startling a man walking down the street. "Because you've led a life of virtue," the angel said. "I'm here to offer you a gift. You can choose to be the most handsome man in the world, possess infinite wisdom, or have limitless wealth." The man thinks for a moment and confidently decides. "I'll take the wisdom," he says. "Granted," the angel declares, vanishing in another puff of smoke. As the smoke clears, the man feels a sudden surge of enlightenment and mutters to himself. "I should have taken the money."

The policeman flagged down a speeding car and when it stopped, he saw that the driver was a teenager. "I've been waiting for you all day," the policeman said. The kid replied, "Well I got here as fast as I could."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH
"I am looking for a lot of people who have an infinite capacity to not know what can't be done."
- Henry Ford

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