NOVEMBER 2026
VOLUME 22 NUMBER 10
Print Post Approved 100002454

HBR mag.com.au

Hunter Business Review

22ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION



2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS



MANUFACTURING IN THE HUNTER

Australia $6.60
ISSN 2202 - 8838 (Print)
ISSN 2202 - 8846 (Online)
9 772202 883002 >

HUNTER BUSINESS REVIEW

Connecting & informing business people

BUNDLE AND SAVE

Viatek proudly partner with leading technology providers to deliver print, document and communications solutions, together.

FUJIFILM BUSINESS INNOVATION Authorised Dealer

xerox Lexmark

powered by access4

Aussie Broadband



DOCUMENT SOLUTIONS

Smarter print technology that works the way your business does.

- Expert remote support
- Enhanced print security
- In-house print marketing
- Secure hybrid workplace

+



COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS

Unified Communications engineers with over 25 years experience.

- Tailored UC solutions
- Secure communications
- Cloud UC platform
- Expert remote support

LET'S UNWRAP THE SAVINGS!



Reduce your total monthly spend ***by up to 30%,*** when you combine communications and document solutions, with Viatek.

Viatek IT'S ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

What could your business save?

1300 842 835

enquiries@viatek.com.au

PUBLISHED BY:
Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd
ABN: 15 112 838 945
PO Box 853, Hamilton NSW 2303
Phone: (02) 4062 8133

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

ART DIRECTOR:
Sandie Collie
sandie@HBRmag.com.au

CONTENT MANAGER:
Jason Duncan
jason@HBRmag.com.au

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

Published monthly (except January)
Hard copy circulation: 5,000
Also available online

www.HBRmag.com.au


GARRY


SANDIE


JASON

HUNTER BUSINESS PUBLICATIONS PTY LTD
2026 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Reproduction in any part prohibited without the written consent of the publisher. While every effort has been made to ensure all information in this magazine is accurate, no responsibility is accepted by the publisher, Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd. Opinions expressed in externally supplied stories are not necessarily those of the publisher.

4 From the Editor
5 Business News
12 Manufacturing in the Hunter
17 2026 Hunter Manufacturing Awards
31 Funny Business





With yet another rate rise on 3 November and inflation sitting stubbornly above the RBA's target range, it is clear that the Federal Government needs to make policy corrections to address the challenging economic conditions.

The Federal Government has voiced that the bulk of the inflationary pressures are coming from increased fuel prices and this is out of their control. Whilst this may be true, it does not mean that they cannot look at policy corrections and the large deficit that also contributes to inflation.

Regarding fuel prices, nobody really knows whether they will ever approach the prices pre the Iran war.

The US people certainly made their thoughts clear at the Midterms, with the Iran war and high fuel prices being major factors in the collapse of the Republican vote.

Fuel prices did dip immediately following the election in hope that the Iran conflict may come to an end.

But the market will soon be looking for actions beyond the hope and it is not clear whether Donald Trump is any more likely to negotiate a full cessation of hostilities.

With his domestic political power weakened, he may very well concentrate even more on foreign issues.

This all means that it would be unwise for the Australian Government to try to wait out Iran conflict in the hope of decreased fuel prices reducing inflation.

It needs to look at what is in its power to attack inflation.

With budget deficits pumping additional money into the economy, the Government needs an immediate investigation and action on reigning in Government spending.

The bottom line isn't helped by the more than $1 trillion in debt that is increasing interest costs each year. By 2029-30 the cost of servicing the debt is forecast to eat up 6.2% of government revenue.

Spending cuts are not always popular but neither are high inflation and high interest rates.

They are also in the position of having up to 18 months to the next election.

It is clear that the economy needs leadership from the Government and we cannot rely on the RBA being the only one fighting against inflation.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

ON THIS MONTH'S COVER

Scenes from Apollo Engineering, winner of the Manufacturer of the Year (50 Employees or More) Award at the 2026 Hunter Manufacturing Awards. For further information on this important industry awards see pages 17 to 30 in this issue.



YOUR PARTNER FOR BUSINESS INFORMATION AND TARGETED B2B MARKETING IN THE HUNTER SINCE 2005

Distributed as a high quality hard copy magazine and online.
View the latest issue online now at **www.HBRmag.com.au**

TARGET BUSINESS DECISION MAKERS!

As the Hunter's leading hard copy and online specialist business publication, **HBR** offers unique targeted promotional opportunities for your business.

DON'T MISS YOUR OPPORTUNITY
Contact Garry Hardie and the team at **HBR** for further information on how we can help you reach the Hunter busines market!

WE WANT YOUR NEWS!

HBR is always happy to consider story submissions for possible inclusion at no charge. If you have company news, major new appointments, business advice or other information of interest, we would like to hear from you.

P: (02) 4062 8133
W: www.HBRmag.com.au
E: info@HBRmag.com.au

Port of Newcastle connects the Hunter to New Zealand with new service

Port of Newcastle has welcomed a new trans-Tasman shipping service, creating a direct link between the Hunter and New Zealand and marking another step in the Port's trade diversification. The MOVe Logistics service commenced on 27 October bringing containers and breakbulk cargo through the Port's Multipurpose Terminal at Mayfield, giving regional manufacturers, exporters and importers another pathway to market.

Port of Newcastle CEO Craig Carmody said the service demonstrated how diversification will deliver practical benefits for the Hunter.

"Diversification is about broadening the trade we handle and creating more opportunities for the industries and businesses that depend on our Port," Mr Carmody said.

"This new connection with New Zealand is a step towards growing containerised trade through Newcastle and giving businesses and producers across our catchment more choice in how they reach their customers and suppliers.

"Our region produces everything from mining equipment and advanced engineering solutions to food and agricultural products. Connecting these businesses with international markets through the port closest to them can help their competition and growth."

For businesses trading with New Zealand, shipping through Newcastle offers an alternative to transporting freight to and from Sydney ports. This has the potential to reduce landside transport costs, avoid congestion-related delays, and simplify logistics.

Mike Brough, GM Oceans and International at MOVe Logistics said "MOVe Oceans has been operating its trans-Tasman route since 2022. The service is well-subscribed with bagged and over-dimension break-bulk cargo, along with project cargoes.



The company is looking forward to servicing the Newcastle and NSW regional business community with breakbulk and container options."

Port of Newcastle is actively engaging with regional manufacturers, exporters, importers and logistics providers to identify cargo opportunities for the new service.

TAFE NSW

Skills that work to drive change

At TAFE NSW, you or your team can gain skills that work, plus the confidence to use them. Learn from industry-experienced teachers and gain practical, future-focused skills through affordable courses designed to drive change for a more sustainable world.

Explore courses in:
+ Building and Construction Trades
+ Civil Construction
+ Electrical Trades
+ Electrotechnology
+ Water Industry Operations

Enrol now

tafensw.edu.au | 131 601



RTO 90003 | CRICOS 00591E | HEP PRV12049

HIA Hunter Housing Awards

Paterson Builders has claimed the pinnacle award at the 2026 HIA Hunter Housing and Kitchen & Bathroom Awards, receiving the HIA Hunter Home of the Year award for an outstanding custom-built home on the Central Coast. Perched on a ridgeline, Avoca Beach House is a four-bedroom coastal residence that seamlessly combines sustainability, craftsmanship and heritage.

The Awards were announced on 17 October before an audience of industry leaders and peers from across the Central Coast, Hunter and Mid Coast regions. The annual awards recognised the talent of designers, builders, contractors, suppliers and manufacturers who design and construct quality new homes, apartments, townhouses, renovations, kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor projects.

Judged by industry professionals, the region's best residential building projects and businesses were selected as winners across 34 categories, with 71 awards presented.

In addition to Home of the Year, Paterson Builders also won the Custom Built Home category and GreenSmart Sustainable Home awards.

Other major project winners included Hunter Homes for Display Home of the Year and Project Home of the Year, Custom Built Projects for Renovation / Addition Project of the Year, JL Monin Building & Projects for Spec Home of the Year, MARS Building for Apartment of the Year and Greenbuild Construction for Townhouse of the Year.

The HIA Professional Builder awards were presented to Eden Brae Homes for Professional Major Builder and Sea to Saw Building Co for Professional Small Builder. Manning Homes was named Emerging Builder, Louis Carmichael received Apprentice of the Year, and Patioworld Central Coast & Sydney North was recognised with the HIA Apprentice Host Trainer award.

Other notable winners included Kingston Building, who secured the Affordable Housing, Specialised Housing and Work Health & Safety awards. Green Ink Design Studio won Residential Design, while Kull Building was recognised for Outdoor Project of the Year. The inaugural Building Supplier/Service Provider award was presented to Integrated Blinds.

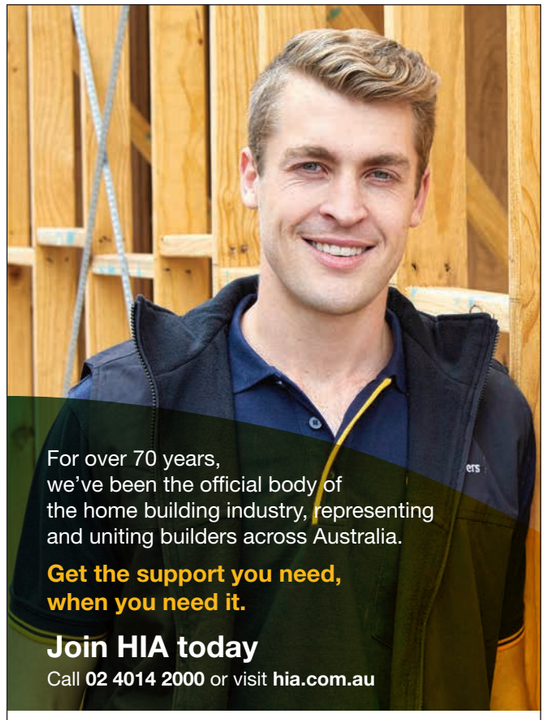
In the kitchen and bathroom categories, Cutting Edge Joinery won both Kitchen of the Year and Cabinetmaker/Kitchen Manufacturer. Sam Horn Building was awarded Bathroom of the Year, Designed by Arna received Kitchen Design, and Tailored HQ was recognised for Bathroom Design.

Mr Jennion said the high standard of entries demonstrated the strength and depth of the residential building industry across the Hunter region.

Overall winners in major categories will now represent the HIA Hunter region at the HIA Australian Housing Awards in 2027, competing for national titles against winners from other HIA regions.

Category	Partnered by	Winner
HIA Hunter Home of the Year	**Buildcert.**	**Paterson Builders**
Professional Major Builder *	Companion Systems	Eden Brae Homes
Professional Small Builder *	Companion Systems	Sea to Saw Building Co
Emerging Builder *	Companion Systems	Matte Building
Building Supplier / Service Provider	Companion Systems	Integrated Blinds
Apprentice of the Year *	Stratco	Louis Carmichael
Apprentice Host Trainer	Narellan Pools Hunter Region	Patioworld Central Coast & Sydney North
Apartment Complex *	BJ's Workwear	MARS Building
Apartment of the Year *	BJ's Workwear	MARS Building
Custom Built Home of the Year *	Fisher & Paykel	Paterson Builders
Custom Built Home up to $600,000	Fisher & Paykel	Aspect Z
Custom Built Home $600,000 - $800,000	Fisher & Paykel	Yarrum Designer Homes
Custom Built Home $800,000 - $1 million	Fisher & Paykel	Edwards Family Homes
Custom Built Home $1 million - $1.5 million	Fisher & Paykel	P & D KAY Constructions
Custom Built Home $1.5 million - $2 million	Fisher & Paykel	BBM Constructions
Custom Built Home $2 million - $2.5 million	Fisher & Paykel	Yarrum Designer Homes
Custom Built Home $2.5 million - $3 million	Fisher & Paykel	Buildingwise Construction
Custom Built Home over $3 million	Fisher & Paykel	Paterson Builders
Display Home of the Year *	Fynd	Hunter Homes
Display Home up to $500,000	Fynd	Hunter Homes
Display Home $500,000 - $550,000	Fynd	Perry Homes
Display Home $550,000 - $600,000	Fynd	Candor Homes
Display Home $600,000 - $700,000	Fynd	Candor Homes
Display Home $700,000 - $800,000	Fynd	Better Built Homes & Developments
Display Home $800,000 - $900,000	Fynd	McDonald Jones Homes
Display Home $900,000 - $1 Million	Fynd	Hudson Homes
Display Home over $1 Million	Fynd	Hunter Homes
Project Home of the Year *	Approved NSW	Hunter Homes
Project Home up to $500,000	Approved NSW	Hunter Homes
Project Home over $500,000	Approved NSW	Montgomery Homes
Renovation / Addition Project of the Year *	NHS	Custom Built Projects
Renovation / Addition Project up to $500,000	NHS	Jedabuild and Designed by Arna
Renovation / Addition Project $500,000 - $1 million	NHS	Muse Built
Renovation / Addition Project $1 million - $2 million	NHS	ORTN
Renovation / Addition Project $2 million - $3 million	NHS	Custom Built Projects
Renovation / Addition Project over $3 million	NHS	Custom Built Projects
Spec Home of the Year *	HIA Apprentices	JL Monin Building & Projects
Townhouse Development of the Year *	CSR	Greenbuild Constructions
Townhouse Development (2-5 Dwellings)	CSR	Greenbuild Constructions
Townhouse Development (over 5 Dwellings)	CSR	QUAD Construction
Townhouse of the Year *	CSR	Greenbuild Constructions
People's Choice Home	Newcastle Herald	Valletta Homes
Affordable Housing of the Year	Wests	Kingston Building
Specialised Housing of the Year *	Major Training Group	Kingston Building
GreenSmart Sustainable Home of the Year	Recycle Central Group	Paterson Builders
Outdoor Project of the Year *	CSR	Kull Building
Outdoor Project up to $300,000	CSR	Amaze Building
Outdoor Project over $300,000	CSR	Kull Building
Purpose Built Project	Oddfish Media Newcastle	BBM Constructions
Residential Design of the Year *	Winning Appliances	Green Ink Design Studio
Residential Interior Design of the Year	Winning Appliances	Tailored HQ
Work Health & Safety	HazardCo	Kingston Building
Product Innovation	Mitchell + Beasley	Paslode Australia
Small Commercial Project	HIA Insurance Services	Lou Projects
Bathroom of the Year *	Reece	Sam Horn Building
Bathroom up to $25,000	Reece	Perry Homes
Bathroom $25,000 - $30,000	Reece	NEL Constructions
Bathroom $30,000 - $35,000	Reece	Greenbuild Constructions
Bathroom $35,000 - $45,000	Reece	Kastro Construct
Bathroom over $45,000	Reece	Sam Horn Building
Bathroom in a Display Home	Reece	Hunter Homes
Bathroom Design of the Year *	Reece	Tailored HQ
Kitchen of the Year *	Harvey Norman Commercial	Cutting Edge Joinery
Kitchen up to $50,000	Harvey Norman Commercial	Greenbuild Constructions & Bliss Kitchens & Joinery
Kitchen $50,000 - $60,000	Harvey Norman Commercial	Executive Building Group and Planit Kitchens
Kitchen $60,000 - $70,000	Harvey Norman Commercial	Planit Kitchens
Kitchen $70,000 - $80,000	Harvey Norman Commercial	Cutting Edge Joinery
Kitchen over $80,000	Harvey Norman Commercial	Vogue Kitchens and Tailored HQ
Kitchen in a Display Home	polytec	Candor Homes and Kitchens for Living
Kitchen Design of the Year *	polytec	Designed by Arna
Cabinetmaker/Kitchen Manufacturer of the Year	polytec	Cutting Edge Joinery

* Progress to 2027 HIA Australian Housing Awards



SHARP OFFICE
HELPING YOUR BUSINESS GROW

Does your business print larger than A3?



With 50+ years of experience in Sharp & Kyocera copiers, we're proud to offer customers even more with the addition of Epson Large Format printers to our range.

- Save time and costs by bringing all your A1, A0 and B0 printing in-house
- Available in 24", 36" and 44" wide models to suit your printing and scanning needs
- Fast drying, anti smudge, scratch-free and water resistant ink
- Achieve precise, vibrant and high-quality prints
- Ideal for industrial CAD, GIS, plans, posters and maps

CONTACT US FOR A LARGE FORMAT DEMO AND A TAILORED SOLUTION

sharpoffice.com.au info@sharpoffice.com.au
02 4962 1313 89-93 Lambton Rd, Broadmeadow

EPSON EXCEED YOUR VISION PREMIUM PARTNER

Hunter Agenda 2027

The Hunter is central to Australia's economic future. As one of the nation's most significant energy, industrial and export regions, its continued prosperity and transformation have implications well beyond regional boundaries. Yet despite its substantial contribution to national prosperity, the Hunter continues to experience significant social and economic inequities, raising important questions about how the benefits of growth and investment are shared across the region.

Against this backdrop, Committee for the Hunter will convene national and regional leaders at Hunter Agenda 2027 on Friday 5 March 2027, shifting the conversation from identifying opportunities and proving the merits of action to accountability for delivery.

Building on the priorities and outcomes of Hunter Agenda 2026, the event will focus on the decisions, commitments and coordinated action required to secure the Hunter's long-term prosperity and ensure its national contribution translates into lasting benefits for the region and its communities.

Hunter Agenda 2027 will feature leading national voices on productivity, economic reform and industrial transformation, with Danielle Wood, Chair of the Productivity Commission, and Professor Ross Garnaut AC, Emeritus Professor of Economics, University of Melbourne and the Australian National University, confirmed as the first keynote speakers.

Their perspectives will inform discussions on the economic and structural changes shaping Australia's future, and the decisions required to strengthen the Hunter's competitiveness, resilience and long-term prosperity.

The event will bring together leaders from business, industry, government, academia, unions and the community sector to examine the region's priorities and the practical steps required to progress them.

Hunter Agenda 2027 will be held on Friday 5 March 2027 at Rydges Resort Hunter Valley. Tickets are now available, with partnership opportunities also open to organisations. For further details visit www.hunter.org.au/hunteragenda2027.

Local business named National Plumbing Business of the Year

A Newcastle plumbing and roofing business has been named the best in the country, with Laser Plumbing & Roofing Newcastle taking out National Plumbing Business of the Year at the annual Laser & O'Brien Group Excellence Awards.

It is the highest honour in the national Laser & O'Brien network, with franchises judged on financial growth, operational excellence, client satisfaction and active brand advocacy.

"Winning Business of the Year reflects the relentless hard work, technical expertise and community first attitude our entire team brings to the job every day," said Mitch Stokes, Director at Laser Plumbing & Roofing Newcastle.

"Whether we're delivering complex commercial projects locally or rolling up our sleeves on community builds abroad, our focus is always on quality, reliability and doing right by the people we serve."

Community impact was a major factor in the win. The team supports workplace giving to Beyond Blue, donates blood regularly, backs local schools and sponsors local sport, including New Lambton Eagles FC and an apprentice's cricket team. The business also looks after its own, recently matching staff raffle ticket purchases for a Road Trauma Support Group NSW memorial fundraiser honouring the late brother of one of its contractors.

Further afield, the Newcastle team was recognised for its role in the group's flagship Taskforce initiative in Nadi, Fiji, which helped deliver more than $1.2 million in critical infrastructure and water conservation upgrades for over 600 students at Nadi District School.

For Hunter homeowners, builders and government partners, the award is a mark of reliability. The business holds three



ISO accreditations; ISO 45001 (Occupational Health & Safety), ISO 9001 (Quality Management Systems) and ISO 14001 (Environmental Management Systems), reflecting its focus on safe, high quality and environmentally responsible work.

The win comes as the business prepares for brand refresh, aligning with the national unification of the O'Brien Plumbing & Electrical network under the Laser banner.

Newcastle rolls out welcome wagon for cruise passengers to deliver business boost

More than 35,000 tourists will be invited to experience the best of Newcastle's east end thanks to an initiative taking advantage of the record-breaking cruise season, which is expected to inject $7 million into the local economy. The Passenger Experience Project is hoping to tap into the economic windfall by transporting cruise visitors via a shuttle bus loop every 20 minutes from the Visitor Information Centre to the corner of Hunter and Watt Street, where they can explore boutique businesses, galleries, cafes and restaurants.

It is one of 16 projects to share in $925,000 of funding through the latest round of City of Newcastle's Special Business Rates (SBR) program.

The Passenger Experience Project draws on proven models from Darwin and Port Adelaide. It was developed in consultation with precinct businesses, the Newcastle Visitor Centre, Destination NSW, the Newcastle Tourism Industry Group and City of Newcastle. Around 20 local businesses are already onboard, offering special cruise passenger deals to improve visitor access and encourage exploration.

The latest round of SBR funding will also support the creation of a New Lambton Fair in May 2027, featuring food trucks, live music, family entertainment, community performances and heritage storytelling. The popular Winterheat Festival will return in 2027, while other community favourites such as Newcastle Fringe Festival, West Best Bloc Fest, Newcastle Tuna & Seafood Festival and Newcastle Food Month also received SBR funding.

The western suburbs will become a destination for events, including the return of the Halloween-themed large scale family event Wallsend Frights and the delivery of 10 new "Hot Shots" community events on the last Saturday of the month offering live music, food and opportunities for local small businesses or makers.

Other supported initiatives include an immersive public art experience in Hunter Street Mall, the Midtown Safety and Visitor Experience Program and a Newcastle Accessible Tourism AI Mapping Project.

The 113,561-tonne Crown Princess



A TRUE STORY FROM A LOCAL ADVERTISER

THEY MOVED ALL THEIR MARKETING TO DIGITAL. WITHIN MONTHS, THEY LOST 25 LEADS A WEEK.

The problem wasn't their digital marketing. It was ***what they stopped doing.***

One Greater Newcastle business did exactly what the experts told them. They moved every marketing dollar into Google, Facebook, SEO and social media and switched everything else off.

Within months, they were losing around **25 leads a week.** Nothing was wrong with their digital campaigns. The problem was what they stopped doing. People stopped hearing about their business. Awareness dropped. Trust dropped. Leads followed.

People buy from brands they **know, like and trust.** Radio builds that familiarity every single day so when your customers finally search online, they already know who they're looking for.

WHO YOU'RE NOT REACHING

186,000
LISTENERS EVERY MONTH

121,000
LISTENERS EVERY WEEK

165,000
LISTENERS WITH INVESTMENTS

Source: McNair Yellow Square 2026/W, Greater Newcastle, Australia

"Radio builds awareness before your customers ever start searching.

BEFORE YOU INCREASE YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING BUDGET AGAIN, LET'S TALK.

2NUR FM103.7
GOOD TIMES & GREAT MUSIC

CALL OUR SALES TEAM
02 4985 4166
sales@2nurfm.com.au | 2nurfm.com.au

Hunter community helps raise $75,000 at milestone 20th Breast Care Breakfast

PKF Sydney and Newcastle have thanked the Hunter community for helping raise $75,000 at the 20th annual Breast Care Breakfast, marking another record-breaking year for one of the region's longest-running and most supported Breast Cancer Awareness Month events.

Held at NEX Newcastle, the milestone event welcomed 500 attendees, bringing together local businesses, community leaders, healthcare professionals and supporters united by a shared commitment to improving outcomes for individuals and families impacted by breast cancer.

For two decades, the Breast Care Breakfast has provided an opportunity for the Hunter community to come together in support of a cause that touches so many lives. Thanks to the generosity of attendees, sponsors, raffle prize donors, and supporters, the event has continued to grow year after year, with 2026 delivering another outstanding result.

All funds raised support the Hunter Nurse Education Group (HNEG), helping provide education, training, and professional development opportunities for specialist breast care nurses across the region.

A highlight of the morning was a powerful and inspiring presentation from the Founder of Breast Cancer Network Australia, Lyn Swinburne AO, whose personal story and advocacy left a lasting impression on attendees and reinforced the importance of breast cancer awareness, education, and support.

Newcastle-Hobart direct flights commence

Direct flights between Newcastle and Hobart returned on 27 October, giving Hunter travellers more opportunity to explore Tasmania and bringing thousands more seats between the two regions over an extended summer season.

The Jetstar service will operate three times a week between Newcastle and Hobart until 24 April 2027, with flights on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

This year's extended season will deliver 156 flights and 28,872 seats, an increase of 34 flights and almost 6,300 seats compared with last season. That represents almost 30% growth year on year.

The direct two-hour flight puts Hobart's renowned food and wine, waterfront, culture and events within easy reach of Hunter travellers, while opening the door for more Tasmanians to experience Newcastle and the wider Hunter region.

Newcastle Airport CEO Linc Horton said the return of the service was another important step in providing the region with greater choice and connectivity.

"The more people across our region choose to fly from Newcastle, the stronger the case we can make to airlines for more destinations, greater frequency and more choice in the future."

Port Waratah CEO honoured with Outstanding Contribution to Mining Award

Hennie du Plooy, Chief Executive Officer of Port Waratah Coal Services, has been recognised for his exceptional leadership and decades-long contribution to the resources sector, receiving the Outstanding Contribution to Mining Award at a ceremony held at NSW Parliament. The prestigious award acknowledges individuals who have made a significant and lasting impact on the mining industry through leadership, innovation, operational excellence and service to the communities and industries they support.

With a career spanning nearly four decades across South Africa and Australia, Hennie has built a reputation as a respected industry leader whose influence extends from mine operations, project development and export terminals to regional economic growth, stakeholder engagement and Industry advocacy.

Beginning as a metallurgical engineer in South Africa, Hennie worked across a diverse range of mining and mineral processing operations before joining Rio Tinto in 1992 where he spent ten years progressing into senior operational leadership.

After moving to Australia with Rio Tinto in 2002, he led Peak Gold Mines in Cobar through expansion and change before moving to Queensland as the General Manager of Blair Athol Mine. He later took responsibility for resource development and strategic mine planning across Rio Tinto's NSW and Queensland coal operations.

Since 2011, as Chief Executive Officer of Port Waratah Coal Services, Hennie has led one of the most important links in the Hunter Valley coal supply chain. Under his leadership, Port Waratah has strengthened its focus on safety, environmental performance, operational excellence and customer service. He has also helped strengthen coordination across the coal chain, supporting the reliable movement of NSW coal to customers around the world.

Beyond his executive responsibilities, Hennie has been a passionate advocate for mining and the Hunter region, dedicating substantial time to fostering collaboration between industry, government and communities. He has served as President and Director of the Hunter Business Chamber, Director of the Committee for the Hunter, Chair of the Hunter Region branch of the AusIMM, and remains a Director of the Hunter Valley Coal Chain Coordinator.



Partnership to strengthen Hunter small businesses

A new partnership between the Hunter Region Business Hub and The Mutual Bank will expand practical support for small businesses across the Hunter, including mentoring, education, networking and access to affordable premises. The sponsorship will help the Hub reach more entrepreneurs and established businesses across Newcastle, Port Stephens and Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Cessnock, Dungog, Singleton, Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter, strengthening business capability, confidence and resilience across the regional economy.

The partnership will support more workshops, mentoring, networking and advocacy, while creating opportunities for financial wellbeing and small business initiatives shaped around local needs.

Hunter Region Business Hub Acting Chair Shane Meister said the partnership would deliver practical benefits beyond the businesses directly supported.

"When a local business gets the right advice and support, the whole region benefits through more jobs, stronger businesses and stronger communities," Mr Meister said.

"The Mutual Bank's support will help us reach more businesses with practical advice, mentoring, connections and advocacy when they need it. Together, we can remove barriers, open doors and give more local enterprises the opportunity to succeed here in our region."

Singleton Mayor Sue Moore recognised with Minister-selected award

Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore has received one of the highest honours in local government after taking out the prestigious Minister-selected Councillor Lilliane Brady OAM Award at the NSW Ministers' Awards for Women in Local Government.

Singleton Council was also recognised for supporting women's participation, progression and leadership by receiving the Excellence in Gender Equity Award for initiatives including the Sharon Hutch Memorial Scholarship which provides a $3000 scholarship to a female employee for professional development opportunities, and the Reproductive Health Procedure providing inclusive leave entitlements and workplace adjustments to support a wide range of needs for women and men.

Co-hosted by Minister for Local Government, the Hon Ron Hoenig MP and the Minister for Women, the Hon Jodie Harrison MP and announced at NSW Parliament House, the Ministers' Awards for Women in Local Government celebrate the women leading, innovating, and making a lasting difference in councils and communities across NSW.

Cr Moore said it was an incredible moment to receive the Councillor Lilliane Brady OAM Award as Singleton navigated a significant state of transition. First elected to Council in 1999, Cr Moore became Singleton's first female mayor as elected by her peers, and the first female mayor by popular vote. She has served three consecutive terms as mayor since 2016.

Awaba House officially reopened

Lake Macquarie icon Awaba House marked a new chapter in its colourful history on 16 October when five past and present mayors cut the ribbon on its rebuild. Lake Macquarie Mayor Adam Shultz joined former mayors Kay Fraser, Greg Piper MP, Jodie Harrison MP and John Kilpatrick AM to celebrate the venue's reopening, seven years after it was gutted by fire.

Mayor Adam said the building's rebirth as a premier dining and events destination marked an important milestone for the city and a proud moment for everyone involved in its reconstruction.

The rebuild cost $6.5 million, with a total project cost of $7.8 million, including initial work after the fire to render the site safe, design, engineering, landscaping, community consultation and other major project costs. The revitalised venue features a function room overlooking the lake, an outdoor terrace for wedding ceremonies and other events, upgraded kitchen facilities, improved accessibility and landscaped grounds.

Internal features include a striking rammed earth wall, and an exposed section of concrete and brickwork near the building's entrance that still shows the scars of the 2019 fire.

Mayor Adam said the venue, next to the Museum of Art and Culture, yapang and Sculpture Park, would become a key destination for weddings, celebrations, corporate events and dining.

Venue operator The Catering Group has completed the building's final fit-out and furnishing. CEO Greg Barclay said he felt "a real sense of responsibility" with taking on a venue like Awaba House.

The building's revival adds to almost 160 years of history for the site, starting with construction of the original Awaba House in the 1870s, just a few metres south-west of the current iteration, which became a home for Margaret and William Quigley and their four children. Fire destroyed the house in 1886, a second Awaba House was built the following year, and that house survived until being demolished to make way for a third Awaba House in the late 1920s.

That building – the one whose facade was retained in the most recent revamp, housed Booragul High School's caretaker in the 1960s. It returned to being a private residence in the 70s and early 80s and was then abandoned and boarded up before being sold to Lake Macquarie City Council in 1993. It operated as the city's art gallery from 1996-2000, then as a cafe and function venue from 2001 until the 2019 fire.

Waratah Super Battery operational

One of the world's most powerful batteries, the Waratah Super Battery, is now fully operational and helping to deliver clean, reliable and affordable energy to NSW homes and businesses.

Built on the site of the former Munmorah coal-fired power station, the Waratah Super Battery has the capability to deliver 850 MW of power and can store 1,680 MWh. At maximum output, the project is capable of powering up to 340,000 NSW households at peak demand.

The super battery acts as a giant shock absorber during events such as power line outages due to bushfires, fallen trees or lightning strikes. A world-first innovation, the super battery combines large-scale energy storage, advanced control systems and existing transmission lines to keep the grid secure while enabling more renewable energy to enter the system.

The Waratah Super Battery is a critical milestone in NSW's energy transformation, supporting the growing volume of renewable energy entering the grid and helping to deliver reliable and affordable electricity as ageing coal-fired power stations retire.

Approximately 1,000 people were involved in the design and construction of the super battery, including 170 workers at the Munmorah site.

Commissioned by the NSW Government's EnergyCo and built by Akaysha Energy, the super battery has now received approval to operate at full capacity from the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO). Transgrid delivered upgrades to the existing electricity network and will serve as the network operator, overseeing the battery's ongoing performance.



WELCOME TO THE ANNUAL SPECIAL FEATURE ON MANUFACTURING IN THE HUNTER, INCLUDING COVERAGE OF THE RECENT 2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS.

Manufacturing has a rich history in the Hunter and remains an important economic driver of the region.

Many people, including seemingly many politicians, do not understand just how important it is to the economic prosperity and security of the Hunter and the entire nation. The importance of a strong manufacturing sector cannot be overestimated.

Although technology is revolutionising manufacturing, it remains a huge direct employer of labour. It is an excellent trainer, helping to create a skilled local workforce and maintaining valuable skills.

Manufacturing is also an important exporter for the nation.

The implementation of modern manufacturing is helping to overcome some of the issues of high domestic labour costs when competing in the global marketplace. Local manufacturers continually show how innovative they are, coming up with unique solutions for the marketplace.

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

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

A strong and diverse manufacturing base in Australia helps the nation to be more self-reliant and less exposed to these impacts that we have little control over. The unsettled global environment has also highlighted the importance of a strong defence sector, and how vital it is to have a supportive local manufacturing sector to protect against possible disruption in global supply chains.

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

Lovells Group opens engineering, advanced manufacturing and retail facility in Carrington

Lovells Group has completed a new $12 million state-of-the-art 5,000 m^2 engineering, advanced manufacturing and retail facility at 6 Everett Street, Carrington, with its official grand opening scheduled for February 2027.

The investment is expected to create 24 specialist roles across engineering, advanced manufacturing, product design and compliance.

Established in 1930: Lovells Group celebrates 96 years of Australian manufacturing, with its headquarters and core manufacturing operations based in Newcastle.

In an excellent example of Australian manufacturing, Lovells manufactures suspension components here in the Hunter, including heavy-duty coil and leaf springs, supporting Australian automotive and industrial applications.

The new facility expands capabilities in product fatigue testing, corrosion and performance evaluation, vehicle dynamic stability analysis and OEM and aftermarket fitment engineering.

Lovells is also investing in cleaner manufacturing, transitioning from traditional gas heating to induction heating technology, improving precision, energy efficiency and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.



The local manufacturing and engineering operations are complemented by a $1 million research, development and testing facility in Edwardstown, South Australia, employing 20 specialists, alongside testing capabilities at The Bend Motorsport Park.

Lovells is also supporting emerging technologies, investing in engineering capabilities for electric vehicles, electric trucks, electric buses and next-generation suspension and drivetrain technologies.

The business is proudly Australian-made and globally recognised, exporting Australian-engineered products to more than 30 countries, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Greece, Kazakhstan and Thailand.

Lovells' suspension and vibration absorption solutions have diverse applications, including automotive, mining, emergency services, agriculture and other demanding industrial sectors.

They are pleased to have over 120 employees, supporting skilled Australian jobs across manufacturing, engineering, research and development, retail and corporate operations.

The continued investment in local manufacturing demonstrates Lovells' commitment to retaining specialist engineering expertise, supporting regional employment and strengthening Australia's sovereign manufacturing capability.

Simon Crane, Managing Director of Lovells said "Lovells is a company built on innovation. This new R&D centre in Newcastle will drive our next chapter of product leadership, especially as we develop solutions tailored for EVs and next-gen vehicle platforms, while staying true to our 96-year foundation of Australian manufacturing excellence."

Sandvik to supply 25 underground mining units to Northern Star Resources

Northern Star Resources, one of Australia's leading gold producers, has selected Sandvik to supply 25 units of underground equipment to support its operations in Western Australia.

The order, which was booked in the third quarter of 2026, includes 14 Toro LH621i loaders, 10 Toro TH663i trucks and a Sandvik DD422i development jumbo. Deliveries are expected to begin in June 2027 and continue through early 2028.

The equipment will be operated and maintained by Northern Star Mining Services (NSMS), Northern Star Resources' wholly owned in-house mining services division.

Northern Star Resources operates several open pit and underground gold mines across three production centres: Kalgoorlie and Yandal in Western Australia, and Pogo in Alaska, USA.

"Keeping underground production moving depends on both equipment performance and the support behind it," said Craig Johnston, Vice President, Sales Area Australia and New Zealand, Sandvik Mining.

"Our local teams will continue working closely with Northern Star throughout equipment delivery, commissioning and ongoing lifecycle management."

Toro TH663i and Toro LH621i are engineered for the most demanding underground mining environments. They offer advanced connectivity, real-time analytics, automation readiness and superior maintainability, enabling high payloads, lower operating cost per ton and safer work sites.

THE LOVELLS
STANDARD
NOW IN NEWCASTLE



Why choose Lovells?

With 96 years of Australian engineering and manufacturing heritage, Lovells delivers vehicle-specific suspension, GVM, GCM and towing solutions that are engineered, tested and certified for demanding applications. Our Newcastle team combines local expertise with the support of Lovells' national network, providing dealers, fleets and vehicle owners with proven products, technical capability and dedicated service.

GVM UPGRADES
BTC UPGRADES
GCM REVISIONS
TOWING UPGRADES
CARAVAN UPGRADES
4X4 LIFT KITS

Talk to the Newcastle team about your next vehicle, fleet or customer upgrade.

lovells newcastle

6 Everett Street,
Carrington NSW 2294
(02) 4093 1525
newcastle@lovells.com.au
lovells.com.au

LOVELLS

Varley to deliver 60 new firefighting vehicles for NSW

Varley are proud to be supporting the continued renewal of New South Wales' firefighting fleets, with 60 new emergency vehicles being delivered from their Tomago facility.

Work for the NSW Rural Fire Service fleet is set to commence following an order for 40 trucks, comprising 25 Category 7 tankers and 15 Category 1 tankers. The Category 1 tanker is one of the largest water-carrying fire trucks in the RFS fleet.

They are also delivering 20 vehicles for Fire and Rescue NSW, including pumpers and bushfire tankers.

Varley's first firefighting vehicle was delivered in 2000. Since then, they have developed long-standing partnerships with Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service, working closely with both organisations to deliver specialist vehicles designed for Australian conditions.

On Tuesday 27 October, Varley welcomed Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib, Member for Port Stephens Kate Washington, FRNSW Executive Director Operational and Strategic Services Kelly McFadyen and NSW RFS Deputy Commissioner Kelly Quandt to their Tomago facility.

The visit provided an opportunity to showcase Varley's emergency vehicle manufacturing capability and the work of the local team. During the tour, guests inspected fire trucks progressing through the assembly line, including new Fire and Rescue NSW vehicles destined for Dungog and East Maitland.

"Every fire truck we manufacture at Tomago has a clear purpose: to support firefighters and help protect communities across NSW," Varley Group CEO Vehicle Division Jeff Honniball said.

"These vehicles bring together the skill and experience of our local workforce with the operational knowledge of firefighting organisations.

"We are proud of our long-standing relationship with both Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service, and of the contribution our people make to delivering modern, capable emergency vehicles here in the Hunter."

Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib acknowledged the importance of local manufacturing in supporting the state's emergency services.

"Manufacturing fire engines here in the Hunter supports local jobs and delivers the equipment our firefighters need to protect communities across NSW," Minister Dib said.

"It's appropriate that we work with local manufacturers like the Varley Group to help refine vehicle design and performance, ensuring our firefighters have appliances suited to the demanding Australian conditions they face."

For more than 25 years, Varley has worked alongside firefighting organisations to understand their operational requirements and translate that knowledge into modern, capable emergency vehicles.

This latest work continues Varley's contribution to Australia's emergency response capability and reflects the experience, technical knowledge and manufacturing expertise of their people at Tomago.

Teralba identified as preferred Hunter site to build NSW's next train fleet

Returning train manufacturing to the Hunter is a step closer with the NSW Government confirming the former mine site at Teralba as the preferred location for the new state-owned facility that will build the next generation of NSW passenger trains.

The announcement is another step towards rebuilding local manufacturing in the Hunter, with the Future Fleet Program expected to support up to 780 jobs during construction and around 550 ongoing jobs across the facility and supply chains.

The facility is a major part of the NSW Government's $12 billion Future Fleet Program to rebuild local train manufacturing capability in the Hunter after it was sent offshore by the former government. By establishing a local manufacturing facility and a long-term pipeline of train orders, the Government is giving industry greater certainty to invest in local workers, apprenticeships and businesses.

Following a preliminary assessment of the Glencore-owned land at Teralba and the NSW Government-owned Broadmeadow site, planning for the new state-owned production facility will now progress at Teralba, subject to further investigations, planning and land acquisition arrangements.

Work undertaken by the Government found Teralba offers a larger and more flexible site that could accommodate train manufacturing, assembly, commissioning and on-site dynamic testing, while also providing capacity for future expansion.

The Teralba site aligns with NSW Government-led planning for the Macquarie Coal Complex Transformation Precinct, which is being progressed with Lake Macquarie City Council and Glencore through a State Significant Rezoning process.

The precinct provides an opportunity to transform the former mining land into a major manufacturing and employment hub, building on the industrial skills and experience that have supported the Hunter economy for generations.

Broadmeadow remains an alternative option at this stage, while detailed investigations, due diligence and acquisition activities continue at Teralba.

The Hunter facility will guarantee more than 30 years of train manufacturing in NSW, starting with the new Tangara replacement fleet before future replacement programs for the Millennium and OSCAR fleets in the 2040s and the Waratah fleet in the 2050s.

The Future Fleet Program will support long-term jobs for workers, apprentices and local businesses and specialist manufacturers in the Hunter. We are already building capacity in the train manufacturing workforce in the Hunter with work on the Tangara Life Extension Program underway at the Cardiff rail facility and Sydney. This employs 100 new qualified workers and 20 apprentices.

The Government will now progress detailed site investigations and due diligence with Glencore to enable further site planning, design and procurement work to commence. Construction timeframes and delivery milestones will be confirmed as the project progresses.

This announcement follows the EOI opening in September for manufacturing firms to design and build the next fleet of NSW passenger trains here in the Hunter.

Premier of New South Wales Chris Minns said:

"For more than a century, workers in the Hunter proudly built the trains that carried millions of people around Sydney.

"Then those jobs were sent overseas. We're bringing them back, because we believe NSW should build more of the things we need right here at home.

"This means good, secure jobs for workers in the Hunter, more opportunities for young people to learn a trade, and more business for local manufacturers.

"And for Sydney commuters, it means new trains built for our network, with local workers and expertise to help keep them running for decades to come."

Subscribe **NOW**
HBRmag.com.au

InfraBuild

INFRABUILD MARKS 110 YEARS OF NEWCASTLE MANUFACTURING WITH NEW INVESTMENT AND JOBS.

For more than 110 years, **InfraBuild** has been part of Newcastle's manufacturing story. Today, around 1,000 people work across its Newcastle operations, with new investment bringing advanced manufacturing technology and capability to the Hunter and supporting a further 50 manufacturing jobs.

The latest investment includes a state-of-the-art mesh manufacturing facility, strengthening InfraBuild's local manufacturing capability and building on a manufacturing presence in Newcastle that dates back to 1915.

Anthony Micallef, **InfraBuild** Executive General Manager, Manufacturing, said continued investment in Newcastle is supporting InfraBuild's plans to expand its steelmaking and distribution capability across Australia.

"Newcastle has been part of our manufacturing story for more than 110 years and we're incredibly proud of that history. Just as importantly, we continue to invest here.

"The opening of our new mesh manufacturing facility, supporting 50 new local manufacturing jobs, demonstrates our ongoing commitment to Newcastle and the Hunter.

"Newcastle plays a crucial role in our national operations. Steel products manufactured in Newcastle go into homes, hospitals, schools, farms and infrastructure right across the country. Newcastle is also playing an important role in supplying steel to Queensland, supporting the $117 billion construction boom ahead of the 2032 Olympic Games.

"Manufacturing has evolved enormously over the past century, but Newcastle continues to have the skills and capability Australia's steel industry needs."

The investment comes as **InfraBuild** progresses its 2030 Sustainable Future Strategy and plans to significantly expand its Australian steelmaking capacity.

The company is targeting steelmaking capacity of more than 1.8 million tonnes by 2030, including increases at its electric arc furnace operations in Sydney and Melbourne. Newcastle is a key part of the broader manufacturing and distribution network that will support this growth.

A key source of future demand is Queensland, where around $117 billion in infrastructure investment is expected as the state prepares for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and delivers major transport, housing and energy projects.

InfraBuild has already secured its first steel contract for a Brisbane 2032 Games-related project, supplying Australian-made reinforcing steel for the RNA Showgrounds redevelopment. Newcastle's manufacturing capability will help support InfraBuild's growing Queensland operations and the pipeline of infrastructure investment ahead.



For Newcastle, a manufacturing story that began more than 110 years ago continues to evolve. New technology, new capability and new jobs are positioning the region to support InfraBuild's growth and the next generation of Australian infrastructure.

US FDA approval for Whiteley Corporation endoscope disinfectant and sterilant system

Whiteley Corporation, a Hunter manufacturer of infection prevention and medical device reprocessing technologies, has announced that its ENDOX endoscope disinfectant and sterilant system has received US FDA approval on 16 October. This marks an important milestone in the company's international growth strategy and commitment to advancing healthcare infection prevention.

ENDOX is a peracetic acid-based high-level disinfectant and sterilant. The system is designed for use in compatible automated endoscope reprocessors (AERs) to support the reprocessing of endoscopes and related accessories.

The FDA approval is an important next step in expanding access to Whiteley's Australian-developed reprocessing technology in the United States, one of the world's largest healthcare markets.

The regulatory clearance of ENDOX® in the United States of America is the second major breakthrough and comes in addition to the existing approval for ENDOX in Canada.

Effective endoscope reprocessing is essential to healthcare-associated infection prevention. Healthcare facilities require reliable, validated reprocessing systems that support the safe reuse of compatible medical devices in accordance with applicable instructions for use and regulatory requirements.

ENDOX has been developed to provide high-level disinfection and sterilisation capabilities within compatible automated endoscope reprocessing systems, with validated processing parameters intended to support efficient clinical workflows.

"Achieving this FDA approval for ENDOX is a tremendous accomplishment for the Whiteley business, and reflects our ongoing commitment to innovation, scientific rigour and healthcare infection prevention," said Dr Greg Whiteley.

"ENDOX represents the application of Australian manufacturing capability and technical expertise to the evolving needs of medical device reprocessing. We look forward to building on this achievement as we expand our international presence and work with healthcare partners to support improved reprocessing practices."

Whiteley Corporation has a long history in infection prevention, medical device reprocessing and professional hygiene. The company develops and manufactures specialised products for healthcare and other professional environments, with a focus on product performance, quality and practical solutions for healthcare providers.

The FDA approval of ENDOX reinforces Whiteley's ambition to extend its reprocessing technologies into additional international markets and strengthen its position in the global infection prevention sector.

WE CAN CLEAN YOUR DIRTY PARTS HERE IN THE HUNTER

Apollo's recent expansion into a Newcastle workshop in Mayfield is bringing Australian-made parts-cleaning equipment, servicing and technical support closer to Hunter businesses.

Through its **Apollo** Parts Washers range, the business supports engine reconditioners, remanufacturing operations, heavy vehicle and rail maintenance facilities, and mechanical workshops. Its automated parts washers are complemented by a comprehensive cleaning chemical range, helping customers match the equipment and chemistry to their application.

The Newcastle workshop is one of three service workshops **Apollo** has established over the past 18 months, alongside Sydney and Brisbane. The expansion provides closer access to serviced equipment, maintenance, spare parts and technical support across both its automated parts washer and Biofeed food-waste processing ranges.

Based in Tamworth, **Apollo** combines engineering and product development with laser cutting, CNC folding and machining, fabrication, robotic welding and assembly. Continued investment in research and development, robotics and automation supports improvements across its products and manufacturing processes.

Apollo's Biofeed business unit has more than doubled its installed fleet over the past year, with strong growth in NSW as businesses respond to food-waste diversion mandates. Its Australian-made equipment helps commercial sites process food waste for sealed storage and collection, with live diversion reporting.



The growth follows a successful October, with **Apollo** winning Manufacturer of the Year (50 or More Employees) for the second time and Excellence in Sustainability at the Hunter Manufacturing Awards. Earlier that month, it also received the Environmental, Social and Governance Award at the national Australian Manufacturing Awards.

For **Apollo**, these achievements reflect the work of its people and continued investment in Australian manufacturing. With an expanding service network supporting its products and customers, this is just the beginning.

www.apollopartswashers.com.au

2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

MANUFACTURERS PROVING WORLD-CLASS SOLUTIONS ARE MADE LOCALLY

Regional manufacturers are exporting technology to international markets, transforming traditional industries through digital innovation, building more sustainable operations and developing world-class products, with these achievements recognised at the 2026 Hunter Manufacturing Awards (HMA).

Announced at the Gala Award Night at NEX Newcastle on Friday 30 October, the Awards celebrated businesses and individuals demonstrating excellence in manufacturing capability, innovation, leadership, sustainability and workforce development across the Hunter, Central Coast, New England and Mid North Coast, with more than 400 industry guests in attendance.

Hunter Manufacturing Awards Chair Chris Kelleher said the winners challenged outdated perceptions of manufacturing and demonstrated the breadth of capability across the region.

"One of the things I love about these Awards is the variety of businesses and ideas they bring together. Beyond our major award winners, this year's finalists and winners include companies helping reshape the future of autonomous mining, creating innovative housing solutions, finding new uses for food waste, extending the life of major rail infrastructure, improving hospital waste disposal and developing products that are being used by customers across the globe.

"Not many people would put mushrooms, affordable housing, hospital waste, mining technology and railway infrastructure in the same sentence, but all are examples of the innovation being delivered by today's manufacturers," Mr Kelleher said.

The diversity of this year's winners highlighted the breadth of capability, expertise and innovation driving manufacturing across the region.

The Awards also attracted 15 first-time entrants in 2026, representing more than one in five submissions and highlighting the breadth of new talent, innovation and manufacturing capability emerging across the region.

"The strong representation of new entrants is particularly encouraging. It reflects both the depth of manufacturing capability across our region and manufacturers' confidence in showcasing their achievements alongside industry peers," added Mr Kelleher.

Beyond recognising commercial achievement, Mr Kelleher said the Awards shine a spotlight on the people, ideas and partnerships driving the industry forward.

"Behind every one of these achievements are skilled teams, innovators, apprentices, leaders and businesses committed to making a difference. When manufacturers succeed, the benefits extend far beyond the businesses themselves. They create jobs, open doors for future generations, strengthen regional economies and help build more resilient communities.

Congratulations to everyone recognised this year for the contribution you are making to your businesses, your industries and our communities. Together, you are helping demonstrate that world-class products, technologies and solutions are developed right here in regional Australia because We Make It Here," concluded Mr Kelleher.



It is by the support off the following organisations that the Hunter Manufacturing Awards can be heldand the success of local manufacturing can be highlighted and celebrated.

SPONSORS

AuditCo
AGL
BAE Systems
BISCIT
Caska IP
Downer
Hedweld Group of Companies
Hunter MLA
KPMG
NTP Talent
Omnia Wheel
Orica
Quarry Mining
TAFE NSW
Varley Group
WesTrac
Whiteley Corporation

PARTNERS

Business Hunter / Business NSW
Central Coast Industry Connect
Helloworld Business Travel Newcastle
Hunter Business Review
Hunter iF
HunterNet
Industry Update
McEwan and Partners
Newcastle Herald
NHN Group
The Melt

SUPPORTERS

Advitech
AON Insurance
Chamberlain Group
Civmec
Commonwealth Bank
Colterlec
Dantia
Design Anthology
Engineers Australia
InfraBuild
Myrtec
Newcastle Airport
North St Partners
Pro-Torque
Reign HR
Rexnord
Scorpion International
Steber International
Sydney Rum Distillery

2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR (50 OR MORE EMPLOYEES)

Sponsor: Downer Group
Finalists: AGRANA Fruit, Apollo Engineering, Bekaert Australia, Sandvik Ground Support Australia, Tomago Aluminium, Vanhomes
Winner: Apollo Engineering

Apollo Engineering is a Tamworth-based manufacturer of specialised mobile mining and industrial equipment that has demonstrated sustained growth while strengthening regional manufacturing capability and expanding its reach into international markets.

The business combines engineering, production, testing and lifecycle support within a fully integrated operation. This end-to-end capability provides oversight across the manufacturing process and supports a consistent focus on quality, performance and continuous improvement.

As the business has grown, it has continued to invest in systems, people and processes that strengthen both operational capability and customer outcomes.

Innovation is embedded throughout the organisation. Apollo Engineering has developed new solutions, adapted products to meet changing market requirements and collaborated with external partners to explore advanced technologies that enhance manufacturing performance and efficiency.

The company's commitment to long-term success extends beyond its operations. Through initiatives focused on sustainability, workforce development and industry engagement, Apollo Engineering is helping build a stronger future for manufacturing while supporting the longevity of its products, people and regional capability.

The judging panel recognised Apollo Engineering's ability to combine growth, innovation and operational excellence while continuing to evolve, expand and lead in a highly competitive market. Its submission reflected a business that remains committed to continuous improvement while maintaining strong regional foundations.

Apollo Engineering also contributes to the future of the industry through engagement with schools, students and education partners, helping raise awareness of the career opportunities available in engineering and manufacturing.

This achievement recognises Apollo Engineering as a leading example of Australian manufacturing excellence, demonstrating how innovation, capability and long-term vision can drive growth, strengthen regional industry and create lasting impact.



HUNTERNET
The power of many
Manufacturing is in our DNA.
We are committed to promoting and supporting the manufacturing industry within the Hunter region.
We nurture connection, collaboration, innovation and growth among our members.
HUNTERNET CAREER CONNECTIONS
Developing skills for success
HUNTERNET FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAM
HUNTER DEFENCE
NEW·E HUNTER ENERGY
EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF MANY
www.hunternet.com.au

apollo engineering
HMA HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS 26
WE.MAKE.IT.HERE
WINNER
Manufacturer of the Year.
AUSTRALIAN MANUFACTURING AWARDS 2026
Winner of the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Award
Made in Tamworth. Service workshop now in Newcastle.
Contract manufacturing
Precision engineering.
Local expertise.
✓ Laser cutting and CNC folding
✓ CNC machining, fabrication and robotic welding
✓ Design, assembly and finishing
Automated parts washers
Keep Components Cleaner. Keep Workshops Moving.
✓ Superior Cleaning Results
✓ Increase Workshop Capacity
✓ Reduce Labour Intensive Cleaning
✓ Machine & Chemical Solutions for Every Cleaning Task
biofeed
Transforming Food Waste Management.
Diverts Food Waste from Landfill.
✓ Lower Waste Management Costs
✓ Improve Back-of-House Hygiene
✓ Reduce Bin Room Congestion
✓ Monitor Performance With Cloud Reporting
apolloengineering.com.au
apollopartswashers.com.au
biofeed.com.au
Phone 02 6765 7353
PROUDLY AUSTRALIAN MADE
AUSTRALIAN MADE

2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR (LESS THAN 50 EMPLOYEES)

Sponsor: AuditCo
Finalists: Elecbrakes, Industrial Gaskets & Sealants, Omnia Wheel, Protective Fencing, Senquip, Steber International
Winner: Elecbrakes

Elecbrakes is a Central Coast-based manufacturer of electronically controlled trailer braking systems that has evolved from a hardware brake controller manufacturer into a software-enabled towing technology business, combining locally developed products with connected features and ongoing digital capability. This evolution has created new ways for Elecbrakes to support customers beyond the initial product purchase. Features such as over-the-air updates let the business continually enhance product functionality while strengthening connections among its engineering, production, and customer service teams.

The company has complemented this innovation with ongoing improvements across its manufacturing operations, increasing production efficiency, supporting a safer workplace and expanding its presence in international markets.

The judging panel recognised Elecbrakes' ability to combine product innovation, manufacturing improvement and customer value. Its submission demonstrated how a smaller manufacturer can successfully evolve in its business model, build capability internally and create a platform for sustained growth.

Beyond its own operations, Elecbrakes continues to contribute to the broader manufacturing community through industry participation, community partnerships and engagement with its local manufacturing network

This achievement recognises a business that has successfully combined manufacturing excellence with digital innovation, demonstrating how Australian manufacturers can evolve, compete and grow in a rapidly changing global market.







Civmec is an industry-leading Australian multidisciplinary heavy engineering, construction and maintenance contractor, providing high-quality integrated services to the resources, infrastructure, energy, marine and defence sectors.

Our advanced facilities and local expertise provide clients with a genuine option to benefit from specialist resources skilled to a principal standard.





Manufacturing
- Heavy engineering
- Off-site modular assembly and testing
- Bulk material handling equipment
- Steel naval shipbuilding
- OEM material handling equipment

Construction
- Module installation
- Structural, mechanical and piping
- Electrical, instrumentation and control
- Structural concrete works
- Site earthworks

Maintenance & Capital Works
- SMPE&I maintenance
- Civil
- Industrial insulation
- Rope access
- Heat resistant industrial linings

Civmec Newcastle Facility
40 Old Punt Road,
Tomago, NSW 2322
civmec.com.au
+61 2 4949 8500
CIVMEC

2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS HALL OF FAME

Sponsor: BAE Systems
Inductee: Ian Hedley (Hedweld)



Recognised as the highest honour bestowed by the Hunter Manufacturing Awards, Hall of Fame induction celebrates individuals and organisations whose leadership, innovation and vision have made a lasting contribution to manufacturing and helped shape the future of the industry.

Ian Hedley was recognised for more than 45 years of innovation, leadership and contribution to Australian manufacturing. Through the growth of Hedweld from a sole trader operation in regional New South Wales into an internationally recognised engineering and manufacturing business exporting to 38 countries, he has helped transform mining safety, create skilled career opportunities and showcase Australian engineering excellence on the global stage.

Driven by a commitment to solving real-world industry challenges, Ian led the development of worldleading innovations that continue to improve safety and maintenance practices across major mining operations worldwide. His influence extends beyond technology and engineering, with apprenticeships, workforce development and skills creation remaining central to the business he built.

Today, Ian's legacy shows not only in Hedweld's global success, but in the generations of tradespeople, engineers and manufacturing professionals whose careers have been shaped by his leadership, mentorship and vision.

His induction into the Hunter Manufacturing Awards Hall of Fame recognises a lifetime dedicated to advancing manufacturing, improving industry safety and creating opportunities for future generations. Through his vision, determination and commitment to solving real-world challenges, Ian has built a legacy that will continue to influence manufacturing for generations to come.

Ian joins an exclusive group of Hall of Fame inductees recognised for their lasting contribution to manufacturing, including inaugural inductee Joss De Iuliis and Varley Group.

McEWAN and PARTNERS
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

BUSINESS | **AUDIT** | **TAXATION**

As proud supporters of the Hunter Manufacturing Awards, we would like to extend our congratulations to all participants for 2026!

Suite 2, 18 Throsby Street, Wickham NSW 2293
E: info@mcewans.com.au | W: www.mcewans.com.au
T: 02 4963 2200

G6363057AA-181013

BAE SYSTEMS

Together, we're delivering Australia's defence industry future.

In an increasingly complex world, the importance of our role is clear.

With the Australian Defence Force and industry, we're delivering at scale some of the world's most advanced capabilities across air, land, sea and cyber to keep our nation safe.

We're building a workforce of 10,000 employees, strengthening supplier partnerships and developing sovereign capability that will endure for decades and support the Australian economy.

Find out more at **baesystems.com/en-aus**



© DEFENCE IMAGES

APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Sponsor: WesTrac
Finalists: Jayden Edmonds (Downer), Eliza McLean (HunterNet Career Connections), Jack Jenkinson (Tomago Aluminium)
Winner: Jayden Edmonds (Downer)

Jayden's pathway into his apprenticeship was not conventional. In his entry, Jayden reflected on how he reassessed his career direction and made the considered decision to pursue a pathway that aligned with his strengths and aspirations. The judging panel was impressed by Jayden's openness about this experience, along with the resilience, persistence and maturity he has displayed since beginning his apprenticeship. One example showed how Jayden identified an issue, investigated its cause, and implemented a practical solution. His response combined technical knowledge with initiative, creating value for Downer and demonstrating capability beyond his years. Jayden also understands the importance of leading by example. He supports apprentices coming through and recognises the contribution he can make by sharing knowledge and helping others develop. These qualities extend beyond technical proficiency. They reflect a commitment to continued learning, personal responsibility, and building the wider team's capability. The judging panel recognised Jayden as a future ambassador for vocational education and training, with the potential to inspire others considering a career in manufacturing.



OUTSTANDING START-UP

Sponsor: Omnia
Finalists: Circular Organics, Streamline Blast Solutions
Winner: Circular Organics

Circular Organics is developing a circular solution to a growing waste challenge by collecting commercial food and organic waste and transforming it into soil products for agricultural use. The business creates value at both ends: collecting commercial food waste and converting it into agricultural products that would otherwise go to landfill. Its integrated model connects waste recovery with local agricultural outcomes, taking organic material from bin to soil. The judges recognised Circular Organics' strong early traction and the significant opportunity created by changing food organics requirements. They highlighted the strength of its vertically integrated model and the potential to meet growing demand for practical, cost-effective organic waste solutions. The entry included results from seedling cultivation trials that reported an approximately 30% increase in production. Judges also noted the company's plans to transition from open-air windrows to modular, containerised processing systems located closer to available feedstock. This approach has the potential to support future growth while addressing the transport challenges associated with moving organic material. It could provide a scalable model for establishing processing capability in additional communities as the business develops.



CASKA IP
PATENT & TRADE MARKS ATTORNEYS



PROTECTING YOUR IDEAS, BRANDS AND INNOVATIONS.

YOU MAKE IT HERE.
WE PROTECT
IT HERE.


Jenna Phillips

www.caskaip.com.au
02 4040 9810


Andrew Caska

EXCELLENCE IN MARKETING

Sponsor: Caska IP
Finalists: Bennetts Steel, Grolia, Streamline Blast Solutions
Winner: Grolia

Grolia used Kickstarter, a crowdfunding platform that lets businesses test demand and secure early customer support before production begins, to launch Flush by Grolia, a new consumer product designed to make growing gourmet mushrooms at home simple and accessible. The campaign validated demand, attracted early customers and generated the funding required to establish a manufacturing line in Newcastle. By engaging customers before production commenced, Grolia gained evidence of market demand and reduced some of the commercial risk associated with moving into manufacturing. Marketing became an integral part of the product development and investment process rather than an activity introduced after production. The campaign also established a direct relationship with the company's first customers. Their early support helped transform Flush by Grolia from concept to production while creating a foundation for the brand's continued growth. Grolia demonstrated how marketing can validate demand, inform investment decisions, and help create the conditions for local production.



2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

EXCELLENCE IN EXPORT & GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Sponsor: Hedweld
Finalists: 3ME Technology, Chamberlain Australia, Omnia Wheel, Pitcrew AI, Protective Fencing, UGL Transport
Winner: Pitcrew AI

Pitcrew AI has built a successful international business around continuous autonomous vehicle inspection systems that help mine operators detect faults and emerging issues across large fleets. This technology is particularly valuable in autonomous operations, where the usual inspection cues available to drivers are removed. Over the past three years, Pitcrew AI has achieved 66% year-on-year export growth. International sales now account for half of the group's revenue. The judging panel commended Pitcrew AI for its clear international growth strategy and disciplined execution. Through targeted market selection, entry into new countries, brand development, and the establishment of distribution channels, the company has built a strong foundation for sustained growth. Pitcrew AI has demonstrated an ability to navigate the complexities of international expansion while maintaining a focus on customer value and the scalable application of its technology. The company exemplifies the global potential of advanced manufacturing innovation developed in our region.



RISING STAR

Sponsor: Whiteley Corporation
Finalists: Brody Kyle (AGRANA Fruit), Kieran Burgess (Australian Electric Vehicle Specialists), Amanda Bloom (Vanhomes), Graham Lyall (Varley Group)
Winner: Amanda Bloom (VanHome)

Amanda has established herself as a valued team member at VanHome, a manufacturer of innovative portable housing solutions, taking responsibility for customer service, warranties, relocations and rentals while continuing to strengthen her leadership, technical and operational capabilities. Her commitment to learning includes completing the EmpowerHer development program and building hands-on repair experience across multiple platforms. This broader technical understanding complements her customer-focused role and has strengthened her contribution across the business. Amanda has also taken a proactive approach to safety by incorporating work health and safety documentation into installer briefs and monitoring driver fatigue against travel hours. Since February 2026, improvements Amanda has introduced across warranty communications, rental operations and customer-facing systems have helped reduce customer response times by around 50%. Her involvement with ManufactHer reflects genuine commitment to the wider manufacturing industry and the development of stronger career pathways. The judging panel highlighted Amanda's ability to embrace substantial responsibility while continuing to expand her own capability.





OUR SERVICES INCLUDE

- International Supply Chain
- Import & Exports
- Project Shipping
- Customs Clearance
- Documentation Support
- Global Network of Agents

CONTACT US TODAY
www.scorpioninternational.com | Phone: +61(0)2 4962 1234

power House
SCORPION INTERNATIONAL

2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

EXCELLENCE IN PRODUCT DESIGN

Sponsor: Orica
Finalists: Design Anthology, Kaebel Leisure, Novecom, Omnia Wheel, SafeGauge, Senquip, Streamline Blast Solutions
Winner: Novecom

Novecom was recognised for the SureWaste platform, an innovative solution designed to help hospitals better measure, track and manage medical waste. SureWaste is a smart waste accounting and analytics platform designed to address the complex challenge of measuring, tracking and managing medical waste in hospitals. It combines technology, user centred design and clear visual cues to help healthcare providers better understand, monitor and manage their waste streams. The judging panel was particularly impressed by Novecom's disciplined approach to understanding the problem before developing the solution. SureWaste considers waste management across the whole hospital while delivering an intuitive and effective tool for the people using it each day. Designed for demanding healthcare environments, the platform balances hygiene and operational requirements with a seamless user experience. It can operate independently of existing hospital infrastructure, allowing it to be introduced without significantly disrupting established workflows. The submission was supported by strong evidence, performance data, and a clear demonstration of the platform's real-world application.



EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING CAPABILITY

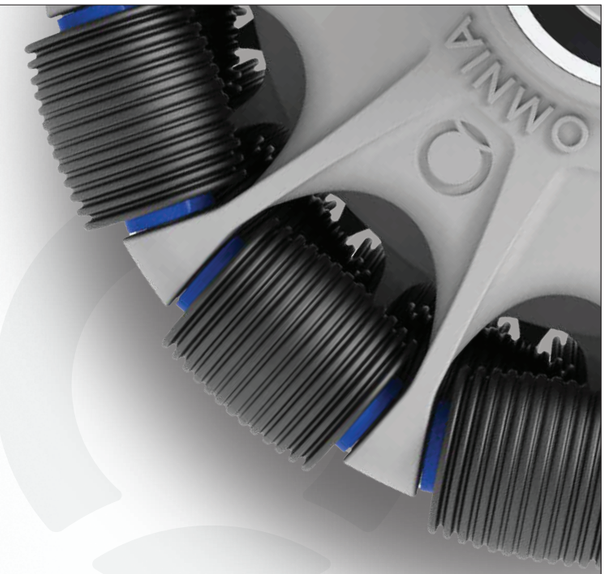
Sponsor: KPMG
Finalists: Omnia Wheel, Sandvik Ground Support Australia, UGL Transport
Winner: Omnia Wheel

Omnia Wheel identified an opportunity to improve an established production process through targeted automation. The initiative focused on creating a scalable solution while retaining and better integrating the company's existing moulding equipment. Beginning with a proof of concept, Omnia Wheel progressed through supplier selection, staged commissioning, and the introduction of automated production cells. Lessons from the initial implementation informed subsequent stages, supporting continuous improvement throughout the rollout. The judging panel highlighted the disciplined approach taken to development and delivery. The submission showed how a clearly defined manufacturing constraint could be addressed through considered investment, careful implementation, and effective use of existing assets. The automation initiative has improved production efficiency, reduced reliance on manual processes, and created a stronger foundation for future growth. It also demonstrates how automation can strengthen manufacturing capability without unnecessarily replacing valuable equipment. It highlights how thoughtful investment in manufacturing capability can strengthen resilience, support sustainable growth and enhance the long-term competitiveness of Australian manufacturing.



OMNIA®

CHANGING
THE WAY THE
WORLD MOVES





OMNIA Wheel is honoured to receive the 2026 Excellence in Manufacturing Capability Award, recognising our commitment to innovation and advanced manufacturing. This achievement reflects the dedication of our Beresfield team and ongoing investment in automation.

HMA
HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS
2026 WINNER
omniawheel.com

Pride starts on the factory floor

At Sandvik Ground Support, manufacturing excellence starts with the people behind it.

WE.MAKE.IT.HERE
HMA 26
HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS
FINALIST

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR AWARD - 50 OR MORE EMPLOYEES

EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING CAPABILITY

Discover ground support engineered for safer mining

mining.sandvik/groundsupport

SANDVIK

2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION

Sponsor: TAFE NSW
Finalists: 3ME Technology, Bennetts Steel, Elecbrakes, Omnia Wheel, Pitcrew AI, Protective Fencing, Supacell, Tomago Aluminium, Whiteley
Winner: Pitcrew AI

Developed for heavy industry, Pitcrew AI's technology continuously monitors vehicles to identify faults and emerging issues that may otherwise go undetected. The system is particularly valuable in autonomous mining operations, where emerging problems can go unnoticed without a driver present. The technology provides operators with timely insights about vehicle condition, enabling earlier intervention and more informed maintenance decisions across large fleets. Evidence presented with the entry demonstrated improvements in truck availability, the prevention of tyre fires and a reduction in unplanned failures. The system has also identified issues that traditional inspection processes may not have detected. The submission clearly linked an industry challenge with a practical technology solution and demonstrated measurable operational benefits for customers. By combining continuous monitoring, autonomous inspection, and real-time data, Pitcrew AI is helping mining operators improve fleet visibility and address potential issues before they become more serious. The result highlights how advanced technology developed in our region can solve complex operational challenges, deliver meaningful outcomes for industry, and compete on a global stage.



COLLABORATION PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Sponsor: Hunter MLA
Finalists: Bekaert Australia & DCA Engineering, Downer & Sydney Trains, Resourceful Living & Glendale
Winner: Downer and Sydney Trains

Downer and Sydney Trains were recognised for the Tangara Fleet Life Extension Program, a partnership demonstrating strong governance, coordinated delivery and technical expertise. Judges highlighted the scale and sophistication of the collaboration and its contribution to local manufacturing capability and skills development. The Program brings together extensive technical expertise, manufacturing excellence and coordinated delivery to support one of Sydney's established passenger train fleets. Delivering a program of this scale requires close collaboration between Downer, Sydney Trains and a broad network of stakeholders. Each party contributes specialist knowledge and expertise while working towards shared operational and delivery objectives. Clear governance and well-defined responsibilities have enabled strong coordination across the partnership. This structured approach has helped the program manage complex technical requirements, maintain stakeholder alignment and support the successful delivery of a long-term project of significant scale. The judging panel recognised both the scale and sophistication of the collaboration, as well as its broader contribution to manufacturing in our region.



DIVERSITY IN MANUFACTURING

Sponsor: Quarry Mining
Finalists: Aruma Manufacturing, Protective Fencing, Talking Stones
Winner: Protective Fencing

Protective Fencing is a manufacturer of perimeter security and fencing solutions that is expanding opportunities for more people to enter, build and grow careers in manufacturing by identifying and addressing barriers that can prevent people from joining, remaining in and progressing through the industry. The business has introduced greater workplace flexibility, more visible development opportunities and practical pathways through apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience, site tours and mentoring. Partnerships with Central Coast Group Training and Central Coast Industry Connect have helped Protective Fencing connect with emerging talent while showcasing the breadth of career opportunities available in manufacturing. The company has also participated in initiatives focused on increasing participation, strengthening workplace culture and developing leadership capability, including ManufactHER, EmpowerHER and Leadership Essentials. The judging panel recognised the company's commitment to creating career pathways and broadening participation in manufacturing. Its submission demonstrated how inclusive recruitment, structured development and flexible workplace practices can contribute to a stronger, more capable workforce.



EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

Sponsor: AGL
Finalists: Apollo Engineering, Biofeed, Steber International
Winner: Apollo Engineering

Apollo Engineering, a manufacturer of specialised mobile mining and industrial equipment, has taken a practical, whole-of-business approach to sustainability. The company has embedded responsible practices into the way products are engineered, manufactured, measured and supported across their full operational lifecycle. The approach centres on using resources efficiently, building equipment for longevity and continually improving its manufacturing processes. Its vertically integrated capability provides oversight across engineering, production, testing, and lifecycle support, helping sustainability considerations remain connected to everyday operational decisions. Apollo Engineering also recognises that sustainable manufacturing depends on people. Retaining experienced employees, developing emerging talent and strengthening regional manufacturing capability are central to the long-term approach. Robust management systems underpin quality, safety, documentation and continual improvement, while the company's local capability enable responsive decision-making and operational agility. The judging panel highlighted the breadth of Apollo Engineering's approach and its focus on making sustainability part of everyday business practice rather than treating it as a standalone initiative.



HMA
WE.MAKE.IT.HERE
26
HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL WINNERS & FINALISTS OF THE
2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

Hall of Fame Inductee
IAN HEDLEY
HEDWELD

Manufacturer of the Year
(Less than 50 employees)
ELECBRAKES

Manufacturer of the Year
(50 or more employees)
APOLLO ENGINEERING

Apprentice of the Year: Jayden Edmonds - Downer
Outstanding Start-Up: Circular Organics
Excellence in Export & Global Supply Chains: Pitcrew AI
Rising Star: Amanda Bloom – VanHomes
Excellence in Marketing: Grolia
Excellence in Product Design: Novecom – SureWaste
Excellence in Innovation: Pitcrew AI
Excellence in Manufacturing Capability: Omnia Wheel
Collaboration Partnership Award: Downer & Sydney Trains (Tangara Fleet Life Extension Program)
Diversity in Manufacturing: Protective Fencing
Excellence in Sustainability: Apollo Engineering
Digital Transformation: Elecbrakes
Excellence in Manufacturing Leadership: Samantha Swain – Protective Fencing

MAJOR SPONSOR
Downer

GOLD SPONSORS
NTP
KPMG

WITH THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS
AuditCo · agl · BAE SYSTEMS · BISCIT · CASKA IP · HEDWELD GROUP OF COMPANIES · MID HUNTER · OMNIA · ORICA · QUARRY MINING · VARLEY · TAFE NSW · WesTrac CAT

AND PARTNERS
BUSINESS HUNTER · CENTRAL COAST INDUSTRY CONNECT · HBR Hunter Business Review · helloworld BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWCASTLE · Newcastle Herald · Hunter iF · HUNTERNET The power of many · Industry Update · McEWAN and PARTNERS · THE MELT · NHN GROUP

2026 HUNTER MANUFACTURING AWARDS

EXCELLENCE IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Sponsor: BISCIT
Finalists: Chamberlain Australia, Elecbrakes
Winner: Elecbrakes

Elecbrakes is a manufacturer of electronically controlled trailer braking systems that has transformed its braking technology from a standalone product into a connected platform delivering ongoing operational insights and customer value. By collecting and leveraging product data, the business has strengthened decision-making across production, customer service and engineering. Teams can better understand product performance, respond to customer needs and identify opportunities for ongoing enhancement. The transformation has delivered measurable improvements to customer support processes and created efficiencies across the business. It has also established a platform for future digital services and the continued evolution of connected products. The judging panel recognised the practical value of Elecbrakes' approach, particularly the way data is being embedded across multiple areas of the organisation. The entry demonstrated clear benefits for customers and employees, supported by a scalable digital model with strong international growth potential.



EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING LEADERSHIP

Sponsor: Varley Group
Finalists: Kellie Whybrow (AGRANA Fruit), Jye Hollier (Australian Electric Vehicle Specialists), Tony Stace (Downer), Samantha Swain (Protective Fencing), Leo Aspite (The Alternative Board Gosford)
Winner: Samantha Swain (Protective Fencing)

Samantha has demonstrated exceptional leadership through her commitment to workplace culture, safety and the development of people at every stage of their careers. Her focus extends beyond meeting the needs of the business today to building the skills, confidence and leadership capability that will support the future of manufacturing. As a visible leader in a traditionally male-dominated sector, Samantha is helping create an environment where more people can build successful careers in manufacturing. She has supported clearer career pathways, structured development opportunities and practical initiatives that enable employees to grow into positions of greater responsibility. Through industry programs and partnerships, Samantha also contributes to efforts to attract new people to manufacturing, strengthen leadership capability and support a more inclusive workforce across the sector. The judging panel highlighted Samantha's strong focus on culture, safety and developing people.



VARLEY
EXCELLENCE SINCE 1886
CELEBRATING 140 YEARS

Built in Newcastle. Trusted for 140 Years.

Industry, technology and markets change.
For 140 years Varley has changed with them.

Born in Newcastle in 1886, the business has grown through innovation, determination and a willingness to tackle challenges others might walk away from. Time and again, Varley has adapted, evolved and found a way forward.

The spirit continues today across 13 major facilities, 10 manufacturing sites and generations of people who help share the future of Varley.

Celebrating 140 Years, 1886-2026.

LEADING THE WAY IN
AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERED SOLUTIONS

varleygroup.com



DEFENCE | VEHICLES | SERVICES | SYSTEMS

There was a break-in at the local Apple Store…
…the police are looking for iWitnesses.

Spencer, Colton, Jamal and Austin had a 94 average in Dr. Ruth Albrecht's chemistry class. They were so confident about Monday's final that they spent the weekend at Colton's uncle's cabin on the lake. Unfortunately, they went a bit overboard on Sunday night and woke up late. They got back to campus at noon on Monday. The exam had started at eight.

Rather than tell the truth, they went straight to Dr. Albrecht's office looking as tired and greasy as possible.

"Professor, we're so sorry," said Jamal. "We drove up to help Colton's uncle with some work, and on the way back we blew a tyre in the middle of nowhere. No spare, no mobile signal. We had to walk 10 km to find somewhere to fix the tyre."

Dr. Albrecht looked at them for a long moment. "That sounds awful. You can take a makeup exam Wednesday morning."

The boys couldn't believe their luck. They studied hard.

On Wednesday she put each of them in a separate room. The first question, worth five points, asked them to name the compound with the formula H^2O. All four relaxed.

Then they turned the page.

Question two, worth 95 points, read: "Which tyre?"

Vince Delacroix had run Delacroix Meats on Market Street for thirty years. For the last three, the storefront next door had been the law office of Celeste Margolis.

Celeste was pleasant enough. Her dog was not.

One Tuesday, the dog trotted in through the open back door, pulled a 2 kg beef roast off the cutting board and waddled back out with it, ears flapping like a victory lap.

Vince wiped his hands, walked next door and leaned on Celeste's reception counter.

"Quick question," he said. "If a dog runs into a store and steals a piece of meat, is the dog's owner responsible?"

"Absolutely," Celeste said. "The owner is liable for the full value."

"Great. Your dog just took my roast. You owe me $50."

Celeste didn't argue. She opened her purse, counted out $50 and handed it over with a polite smile. Vince went back to his counter feeling very pleased with himself.

The next day an envelope arrived from next door. Inside was a bill: "Legal consultation regarding one stolen roast: $250."

The traffic cop had been parked behind a billboard since 9 am. He'd been told he was way down on bookings and had to issue some, or else.

By noon, he had seen one tractor, two kangaroos and a man on a ride on mower who waved at him very politely. At 5:48, twelve minutes before the end of his shift, a silver minivan came over the hill doing 140 in the 100 zone. He nearly cried with joy, hit the lights and the siren and pulled him over half a km down the road.

The driver was a mild-looking man named Silas Yoon, with a car seat in the back and a sheet cake on the passenger side. He rolled down his window and smiled.

"Sir," he said, "I have been sitting behind that billboard since 9 am this morning, waiting for you."

The driver nodded sympathetically and said "Yeah, well, I got here as fast as I could."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Time waste differs from material waste in that there can be no salvage"

- Henry Ford

NCP PRINTING



WE KNOW PRINT.

At NCP, we provide a comprehensive suite of print and related services including:

- Award-winning Offset Printing
- Digital Printing
- Graphic Design
- Packaging
- Celloglazing and Coating
- Prepress Services
- Embossing and Foiling
- Die-cutting and Carton Making
- Wide Format
- Print Management
- On-line Ordering
- Transactional Mail/Intelligent Mailing
- Variable Data Printing
- Warehousing and Distribution
- Kitting and Packing
- Inventory Management
- PUR Binding

NEWCASTLE OFFICE
3/5 Grattoir Place, Toronto NSW 2283
P 02 4926 1300 **E** sales@ncp.com.au
ncp.com.au

SYDNEY OFFICE
8-10 Frank Street, Wetherill Park NSW 2164
P 02 9757 3000 **E** sales@brightprintgroup.com.au
brightprintgroup.com.au

B | P | G
BRIGHT PRINT GROUP
NCP is a division of the Bright Print Group.



KONGSBERG

Local people. National importance.

Launch your next career move with us.

kongsberg.com