



2025-26

HUNTER BUSINESS FUNCTION GUIDE

THE COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL GUIDE TO HELP WITH
FUNCTION AND EVENT PLANNING FOR YOUR BUSINESS



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GARRY



SANDIE



JASON

Welcome to the 2025–26 Hunter Business Function Guide, an annual special coverage by HBR to help businesspeople with planning and running a successful event in the Hunter region.

The Hunter has a well-earned reputation as an ideal location for business functions, with a growing number of local, Australian and overseas businesspeople experiencing the excellent locations and services available.

One of the exceptional strengths of the Hunter is its extremely broad range of venues available, satisfying all tastes and budgets. The Hunter can readily accommodate any type of function, from small, intimate gatherings, to large expos and international symposiums. The locations vary immensely, from the CBDs of major centres, to water-front venues, vineyard experiences and rural retreats.

The Hunter also has a wide range of excellent support services to help ensure that you have a successful event. Whether you need help with just one aspect of an event or someone to take responsibility for almost the entire event, the Hunter has an experienced organisation ready to work with you.

The region is also unique in its range of accommodation, dining options and activities for delegates and visitors.

The Hunter is truly the perfect location for almost any type of business function.

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FUNCTION VENUE**

FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE 2025

| Venues | Location | Room Capacity | | | | | Facilities | Onsite activities | Accom. rooms | See page |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---|--|--------------|----------|
| | | Conference rooms | Max Area/M ² | Max Cocktail | Max Theatre | Max Banquet | | | | |
| Amanda's on the Edge | Pokolbin | 2 | N/A | 45 | N/A | N/A | In house catering | Restaurant | N/A | 17 |
| Anchorage Hotel & Spa | Port Stephens | 7 | 144 | 160 | 160 | 110 | AV equipment, screens, whiteboard, flip chart, sounds system and WiFi | Spa treatments at on-site Spa Lucca, cocktail masterclasses, whisky tastings, high tea by the sea, sailing experience, The Galley Kitchen – all-day dining, Moby's Bar – Bar, onsite parking, two pools, one adults-only, poolside bar | 80 | 2 |
| Apollo International Hotel | Charlestown | 4 | 125 | 200 | 110 | 100 | Microphone, wireless internet, blue-tooth audio, tv, data projector screen, clothes tables, water, mints, whiteboard, flipchart | Inground pool & gym, Complimentary Parking, Free WiFi, Restaurant & Bar, Breakfast Buffet. | 95 | 4 |
| Bay Sailing Centre | Soldiers Point | 1 | N/A | 70 | 50 | 40 | Wireless internet, TV | N/A | N/A | 12 |
| Earp Distilling Co | Carrington | 3 | 415 | 500 | 200 | 250 | Accessible restrooms, even graded flooring for wheelchair using persons and persons with mobility issues, Aircon, Dance floor, Filtered water, Flip chart, Lighting, Microphone, Natural Light, On-site parking, pens & paper, Projector, Smoking Area, Speakers, Stage, TV, Whiteboard, Wifi, Chairs (up to 100), Tables, Basic table cloths and napkins, Basic cutlery and plateware, Food & Beverage packages. | Distillery Tour, Tasting Flights, Blending Class, Spirit School | N/A | 10 |
| Fort Scratchley Function Centre | Newcastle | 1 | 246 | 200 | 150 | 140 | On-site parking, in-house catering, dancefloor, data projector, screen, flipchart, WiFi, whiteboard, lectern and wired microphone. | Contemporary, flexible venue with uninterrupted ocean views; north facing deck for alfresco drinks and breaks; access/tours of Fort Scratchley Historic Site. Tailored catering available, designed by our Executive Chef. | N/A | 9 |

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FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE 2025

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|--------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--|---|--------------|----------|
| | | Conference rooms | Max Area/M ² | Max Cocktail | Max Theatre | Max Banquet | | | | |
| HIA Home Inspirations | Mayfield West | 3 | N/A | N/A | 80 | N/A | Data projector unit, Microphones, audio, video conferencing (Board room only), WiFi | N/A | N/A | 18 |
| Maitland Town Hall | Maitland | 8 | 460 | 300 | 380 | 300 | All events held within the Maitland Town Hall Main Hall utilising any audio/visual/lighting equipment, will need to work directly with Councils preferred inducted contractor being Scion Audio and Events. | N/A | N/A | 8 |
| Merewether Surfhouse | Merewether | 2 | 390 | 350 | 250 | 250 | 1 x 65" HD Plasma Screen and 2 x 85" QLED Plasma Screens. 5 microphones available, as well as a stage to hire. Guest WiFi is also available | Restaurant, Rooftop Bar and Mexican Beach Bar | N/A | 11 |
| Murrook Culture Centre | Williamstown | 3 | 502 | 600 | 420 | 240 | 3 data projectors and motorised screens, In-room sound system with wireless microphones, Wi-Fi, whiteboards, flip charts, lectern, tea and coffee station in each function room, catering packages available, ample carpark | Cultural Workshops & Training, Sand Dune Adventures Quad Bike tours, Cultural Services, Murrook Café, Cultural Gallery and Interactive Experience Centre, Retail, Parklands. | N/A | 14 |
| Newcastle City Hall | Newcastle | 7 | 382 | 500 | 805 | 300 | Accessible rooms (x7); in-house catering, data projector, screen, flipchart, Wi-Fi, whiteboard, lectern and wired microphone; notepads, pens, mints, still and sparkling water all included. | Historic city-centre venue; balcony overlooking Civic Park; versatile rooms for breakouts and exhibitions; 2000 accommodation rooms within 10mins walk; tailored catering featuring regional produce with menus designed by our Executive Chef. | N/A | 9 |
| Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club | Newcastle | 5 | N/A | 300 | 200 | 300 | Microphone, 65"+ TVs, lecterns, onsite catering, tea+coffee station, wireless internet. | Learn to Sail opportunities | N/A | 13 |
| Newcastle Racecourse | Broadmeadow | 12 | 2240 | 1800 | 1500 | 750 | Onsite catering by in-house chefs, Over 900 complimentary car parks, PA, sound and data projection systems, Wireless internet access, Handheld microphones, projector screens, TV monitors, Disabled access and equipment-friendly entries, All rooms fully air-conditioned and most with natural lighting, Event supervisor and standard, Note pads, pens, mints, iced water. | Race Day hospitality packages, Beautifully maintained outdoor lawns for breakout sessions, Scenic backdrops for photos and outdoor events, flexible, partitionable spaces for tailored experiences, Support from a dedicated Events Team from planning to execution | N/A | 15 |



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FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE 2025

| Venues | Location | Room Capacity | | | | | Facilities | Onsite activities | Accom. rooms | See page |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---|---|--------------|----------|
| | | Conference rooms | Max Area/M² | Max Cocktail | Max Theatre | Max Banquet | | | | |
| NOAH'S On The Beach | Newcastle | 8 | 382 | 300 | 300 | 200 | Lectern, lectern microphone, roving microphone, Data projector, projector screen, wireless internet, whiteboard, flipchart stand. | Restaurant & Bar, Free Parking | 90 | 3 |
| Pacific Dunes - Greenhouse | Medowie - Port Stephens | 1 | 270 | 180 | 200 | 144 | Full integrated data projector, dop down projector screen, 4 roaming microphones, mic stand, wifi internet, lectern, iphone / HDMI / PC / mac / connectors etc, white board, flip chart, black out blinds, free onsite parking, accessible amenities, covered terrace for break in the kitchen garden, tea & coffee station and catering all available. | Greenhouse - Restaurant & Bar 18 hole championship golf course with practice facilities, fully stocked golf shop, outdoor bar terrace, kids play area, Thursday night trivia, Sunday live music | N/A | 16 |
| The Valley Brewhouse | Nulkaba, Hunter Valley | 3 | 600 | 150 | 120 | 120 | Projector, microphone, wireless internet, own bar, own kitchen, own toilets, disabled access, private entry | Brewery for tastings & tours, Potters Apartments onsite which has tennis courts, swimming pool, local golf courses, wineries, etc | 68 | 6 |
| Wallsend Diggers | Wallsend | 4 | 600 | 400 | 350 | 300 | Cordless microphone, built-in data projectors, complimentary Wi-Fi, lectern, whiteboard | Multiple food & beverage outlets, outdoor undercover courtyard & children's playground, wheelchair friendly | 48 | 7 |

SUPPORTING SERVICES

The Hunter Region is blessed with a wide variety of organisations that can provide services and expertise to help make your event be a success.

| COMPANY | SERVICES | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|--|------|
| Beyond Ballooning | Team building corporate flights | 16 |
| Nova Cruises | Team building cruises | 18 |
| Scion Audio & Events | Audio, visual, staging & event equipment | 5 |



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TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR NEXT EVENT A SUCCESS

It can be a demanding task to organise a successful event, particularly if it is large or it's your first time. One of the more disappointing aspects for the organiser is that most attendees probably have no idea of how much work has been involved. Those without function organising experience often think it is just a matter of booking the venue and sending out the invitations. The organisers are often not really thought about unless something very memorable occurs, be it positive or negative.

Every event is different and will have its own requirements; however, the following general tips will help you to achieve a successful event.

Hiring professional help

There are a range of local businesses that can help with your event, from assisting with one aspect (like catering) to organising almost the entire event.

Even if you gain the services of an event planner, this does not mean that you will have no responsibilities in the planning stages. First and foremost, you must have good communications with the planner and ensure both sides have a clear understanding of the type of event, its goals and its budget. The event planner will also require input from you along the way with necessary information and options requiring a decision. These should be attended to promptly but with due consideration. In the end the event planner wants the event to meet the client's expectations, so your input is important and required.

Initial planning

The first task is to clearly define the reason for the event and what you hope to achieve from it. Finalise the type of event or function it will be – launch, networking session, end of year party, exhibition, seminar, team building etc. Next set the budget available, including both revenue streams (if applicable) and expenses. If it is re-run of a similar earlier event, these stages will be much easier. Make sure to also have realistic and measurable targets.

Event budget

Set a budget at the start and monitor it as each stage progresses. It is usually best if you can allocate some of the budget for unforeseen expenses as these often occur.

Date and venue

Much care must be taken when setting the date and venue as it is not usually easy to change these. When considering the date take into account public and school holidays, other major or competing events, staff and equipment availability and any other issue that may restrict the timing.

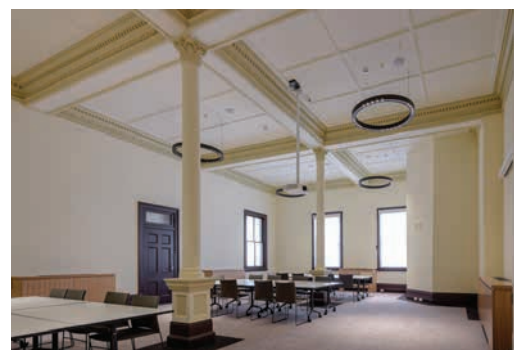
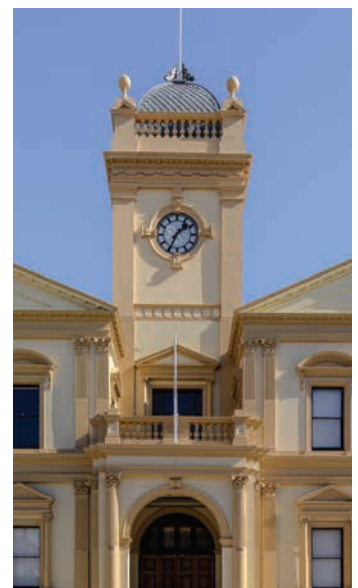
Risk management

Create a risk management plan and ensure any appropriate insurance is in place and current. Create a contingency plan for factors outside of your direct control on the day.

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Timeline

Prepare a project timeline with tasks that must be accomplished by specific dates. These may include:

- When to announce the event
- Preparation of promotional material
- Selection of caterer and menu
- Selection of entertainment
- Organisation of audio-visual needs
- Selection and confirmation of speakers
- Selection of accommodation
- Organisation of insurance or permits
- Preparation of a contingency plan for the event
- Organisation of transportation
- Organisation of marketing, signage and social media
- Finalisation of program
- Confirmation of attendees
- Preparation of event material
- Organising set up

At the event

The better the planning and preparation, the better the chance that all will go smoothly on the day. Often it won't go exactly to plan, but most attendees will be unaware. Try to stay calm, even if there are a few hiccups, and finally try to enjoy yourself.

After the event

When the event is finished, you will need to remove equipment and possibly rubbish from the venue. Depending upon the nature of the event, sponsors and participants may be thanked and possibly given a questionnaire for feedback. In the days following the event have a debrief session on the event, covering the successful aspects as well as those that could have been improved. If appropriate, a report on the event can be sent to participants and sponsors. Plans for future events can also be included.



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MARKETING YOUR EVENT

One of the most important parts of organising an event is letting people know about it. If there are no attendees, there is no event.

There are many paths available to do this. Advertising for your event should involve a mixture of the tactics depending on your target audience and where they seek out event information.

Traditional marketing tactics

Direct mail marketing campaigns, press releases and hard copy advertising are a great way to announce the event and know that it is getting to the right target audience.

Social media

Social media is an effective way to advertise your event. Platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are an easy way to reach people.

Use attendees

When people sign up for your event, provide them with opportunities to share the information about your event on social media or via email.

Invite major industry players

Contact prominent people in the industry, who also have a following on their social networks. Invite these people to your event and it's sure to get coverage on a lot of related socials.



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Market the speakers

If your business has the budget to book a well-known speaker, it will create more hype. When marketing your speakers focus on their education, experience, and interesting facts about their lives. This will generate interest in hearing these facts and experiences live. Feature your speakers in your media releases, hard copy advertising and social media.

Testimonials

Testimonials are great if your business organises an annual event that is well attended, especially by regular attendees and repeat vendors. Get testimonials from attendees and vendors about your key outcomes for the event e.g. the event was informative, fun and I made some key contacts.

Corporate sponsorships

Gaining corporate sponsors for your event is a plus for both parties. When the sponsors advertise the event, not only is it good marketing for the event, it is also a good marketing strategy for their company.

Free tickets

Another great way to promote your event is to offer the participating sponsors, speakers, industry players and vendors free admission tickets. You can request that they mention the event to all their contacts or share it on social media.



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BOOKING THE RIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

What would your audience enjoy?

Think about the type of attendees that will be at your event. What sort of entertainment would be suitable? If they are an older crowd they may not want to listen to an AC/DC tribute band. Similarly, a young crowd wishing to celebrate probably aren't going to enjoy a classical violinist.

Entertainment budget

When it comes to entertainment for events it is easy to go way over budget. Make sure you are given a reasonable budget and stick to it. Also think realistically. There is no way you are going to be able to afford David Copperfield but there is always up and coming magicians that can be just as entertaining.

How big is the entertainment space?

The amount of space you have will have an impact on the type of entertainment you book. If it is only a small venue think about hiring an entertainer that doesn't take up much space and won't overpower the event.

Risk assessment

Depending on the act you are planning to hire it is worth reviewing your organisation's insurance and go through a risk assessment with your venue. The entertainment that you hire can affect the risk involved with organising an event e.g. acrobats or magicians that work with fire.



What effect will the entertainment have on venue hire duration?

The amount of set up your act has could affect the amount of time you need to hire the venue. You may need to pay the venue for access to the space before and after the event. When hiring an act make sure you find out how long it takes for them to set up and make sure it is in your budget to cover these costs.

See your entertainers perform

This one is a no brainer. You need to see your entertainment perform before your event to make sure they are the right choice. If you are unable to find the time to see them live try to see a video of their performance. Youtube is often an easy way to do this.



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ORGANISING A WORK SOCIAL DAY

The Hunter region offers a wide spectrum of activities for organising a work social day, from adventure parks, race days, wine tours, brewery tours, team building events and many more.

Many businesses organise activities for their staff in an effort to build a more effective team, use it as a reward, to increase job satisfaction and to help get to know staff. Work social days are a great way to achieve these outcomes but if they are poorly organised these activities can fail to produce and even dampen morale if it is seen as just a work obligation.

The following tips will help you with planning your team building activities.

Decide on objectives and a budget

What is the purpose? Different activities will gain different outcomes. Is it to celebrate a significant business accomplishment, reward staff, let staff get to know each other better without work pressures, help staff see the "bigger picture" or some other purpose? The activity needs to be selected to meet the goals and keep within budget, for example a wine tour would be a great way to celebrate a business accomplishment, whereas an informal lunch is better way to introduce a new staff member.

Select an activity suitable for your whole team

If you have less active members, it is not a great idea to organise anything too strenuous. Don't select an activity that is likely to have an extreme range in abilities. Don't let the activity be overly competitive – you can have winners if you




want, but make sure that others don't feel like losers. Keep in mind not everyone drinks alcohol or feels comfortable around people who are drinking or can eat the same type of food.


Pick a convenient time

Employees will be most receptive to an activity that is during work hours and does not interfere with their personal time. When scheduling the activity, keep your employees' schedules and personal obligations in mind. If you have employees with children in day care or school, make sure that the social day does not interfere with their pick-up schedule or require them to plan additional childcare.





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Consider help

Ask possible venues for tips, what has worked before etc. You can even consider hiring an external professional to organise the whole or some of the activities.

Don't forget travel time

You may find a great location, but staff may not be happy if they have to travel an extra hour or two each way. If you are really set on a location a little more distant, consider hiring a mini-bus and also use the travel time effectively.

Provide food

Make sure food is involved in the planning as no one is happy if they are hungry or if finding something to eat is a chore.

Send out a questionnaire about food requirements and allergies.

Don't make it about the business

Don't bore staff with speeches or work-related talks. Make the day interesting and memorable. The best activities are those a bit different, not something many of the staff do on a regular basis.

Encourage staff to mix

Forget about staff hierarchy. Make all staff feel like they are on an equal footing. If you have a large number of staff, consider nametags with just their first name. If the activity involves teams, try to have teams comprised of staff members that normally don't work closely.

Ease work pressure

Make sure that you reduce the employees' workload that typically gets done during the scheduled team building time so that they do not have to work nights or weekends to get their jobs done. You may need to hire temporary staff. Take into account the downtime when setting schedules and targets.

Get post-event feedback

After the event, have employees provide anonymous feedback on the team building day. By knowing what your employees liked and disliked about the event, you can better plan team-building activities in the future. If you planned the day for a specific reason, evaluate the outcome after the event.

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SELECTING YOUR VENUE

One of the most important decisions when planning a business event is the venue. Assuming you do not have suitable in-house facilities, you will likely be faced with a range of venue options and these must be evaluated early in the process. The following are factors to consider when you are deciding upon the venue for your next event:

Location – The venue should be easy to get to for participants and attendees. It is usually good to be located close to most of attendees to minimise travel time and increase attendance. If you think many will use public transport then these links should be evaluated. If most will be driving then close-by parking facilities will be an important consideration.

Venue suitability – Obviously the venue must be the right size for your event. If it is too small you will not have enough room for everything you need as well as attendees. But if it is too large, it may feel quite dead and empty. If the venue is not air-conditioned you should consider ventilation or heating options, particularly if the event is being held in summer or winter. If extensive setting up is required, such as in an expo, then ease of access to the venue can be important. The venue also may need to be available for ample time before and after the event. Wheelchair and invalid access may also be a consideration.

Facilities & services – The available facilities and services provided by a venue can be of major benefit in the quality of an event, the total cost of an event and the ease of organisation. Check there is sufficient chairs and tables (if required). These days' microphones, audio visual facilities



and internet access are essential for many functions. If food and drink facilities are not available, or not available to the desired quality, then there are a number of excellent caterers available in the Hunter that can help.

Availability – The venue does of course need to be available. The earlier the venue is locked away, the better the chance of having it for your desired time. You will also have more flexibility in settling on a date if you start early.

Cost – Cost is always a factor to consider, particularly if operating on a tight budget but make sure you are taking all costs into account. For example a more expensive venue that provides additional facilities at no charge may well work out cheaper in the long run than a cheaper venue that provides little and you need to arrange additional facilities.

Venue staff – The quality of the venue staff is sometimes overlooked. Good venue staff are a major help both in the organisational phase and on the actual event day. Alarm bells should start ringing if you find them disinterested or they fail to respond to enquiries.

Other help – Don't be shy to ask other organisations that have had similar types of events about their experiences. Event organisers can take away most of the venue selection work. They also have more detailed intelligence on possible venues and the range of options available

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