

# HBR

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## 54 Business News From the Editor

## 16 Let's Talk With

## 17 Business Advice

## 19 New Appointments

## 20 Property

## 23 Innovation in the Hunter

## 33 Superannuation, Investment & Taxation

## 38 Business Services Directory

## 39 Funny Business

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# From the Editor



This issue includes a feature on Innovation. For many years we have all heard about the importance of innovation in driving the Australian economy in the 21st century but unfortunately, the term is often thrown about by many businesses and governments without any coherent plan to take advantage of the opportunities it can create.

Innovation has become a bit of a hackneyed expression in many marketing and business plans, seemingly because it sounds good, but not backed by action.

Government policy has often been fragmented, without a real understanding of the possibilities and without definite goals in mind.

Despite this, an increasing number of businesses and other organisations are embracing the vision of what could be and offering new solutions to enhance business opportunities and to improve the quality of life.

The Hunter is continuing to build its reputation as a centre for innovation excellence, with a world-class university, supportive local governments and other organisations, and an array of ground-breaking businesses forming an innovation ecosystem that is making impressive advancements in a wide range of fields.

The Hunter Innovation Festival is returning in May, helping to highlight local successes, and helping to encourage others to open their minds to the possibilities available through innovation. See page 28 of this issue for further information on the 2021 Hunter Innovation Festival.

The Hunter is also being identified as a centre for renewable energy and the enormous opportunities it brings.

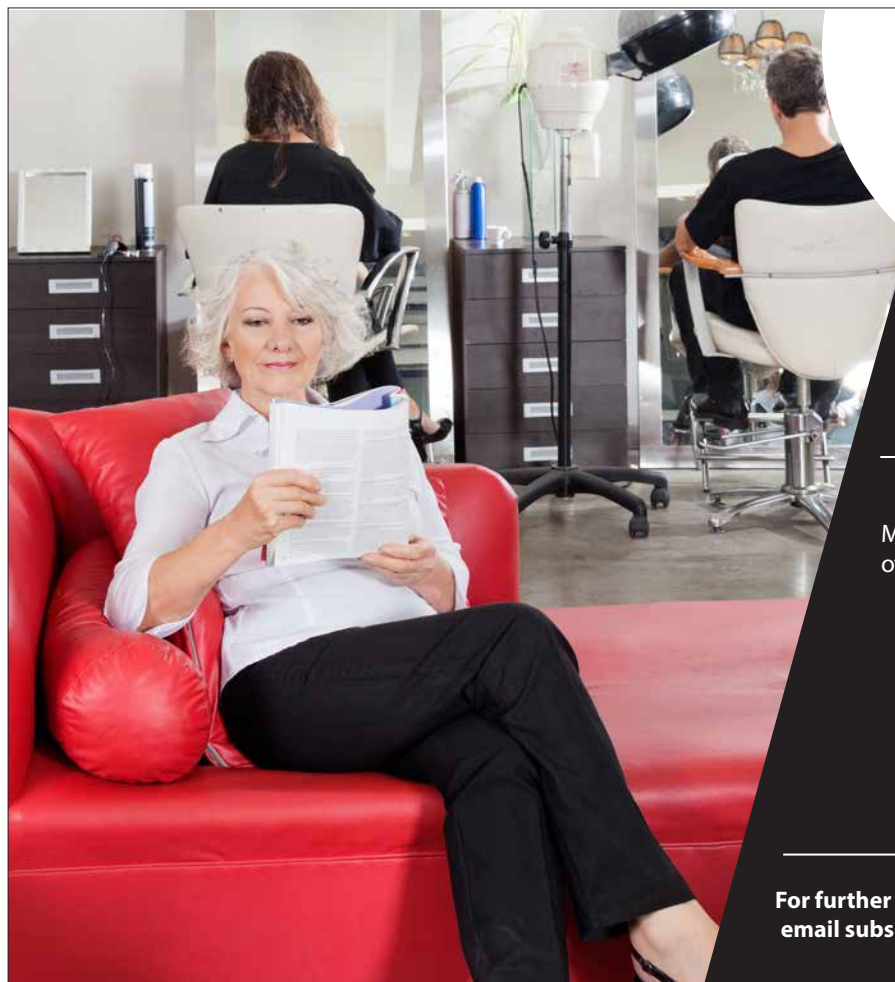
Recently, the Hunter has been identified as a Hydrogen Hub and the NSW Government has set aside \$70 million to help make this a reality.

Beyond Zero Emissions is also launching the Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct Project in the Hunter at the Innovation Festival on May 3.

There have also been a number of major energy related announcements in recent months, including a major lithium-ion battery manufacturing facility at Tomago and some major large-scale battery projects that can help regulate electricity supply, including electricity produced by variable renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.

It is certainly an exciting time in the Hunter and we have the opportunity to grow further in coming years and cement our place as a recognised centre for innovation, not just in Australia but globally.

**Garry Hardie**  
Editor and Publisher



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## The Knights Rugby League Centre of Excellence



APP's Northern NSW team has been engaged to deliver a new rugby league Centre of Excellence (CoE) for the Newcastle Knights. The \$20 million project is to be delivered under a funding agreement between the NSW Office of Sport and the Knights owners, Wests Group.

The new facility on a 7 ha site at District Park in Newcastle will provide a world class rugby league training facility and additional facilities suitable for community use.

The new CoE will span 3,500 sqm over a single level include a number of features including:

### Players' and Coaches' Facilities:

- Training facilities including a gymnasium with an associated hydration area and supplements store, lap pool and sauna, and theatre
- General player facilities
- Ancillary injury management and rehabilitation facilities including a physio and rehabilitation clinic with ancillary storerooms and doctor's office
- Half-size concrete basketball court.

### Public Facilities:

- Café with small kitchen and outdoor terrace for staff and players, and public access
- Function room/players' dining room with commercial kitchen
- Legends Room' providing an area for public display of club memorabilia and awards.

Appointed in mid-2020, one of APP's first tasks as Project Manager and Client Representative was to manage a 6-week design period to develop a modified design based on what had been submitted to Council, so that D&C tender documents could be issued.

APP has managed and continues to manage a number of rugby league Centres of Excellence throughout NSW including the NSW Rugby League Centre of Excellence at Homebush, Manly Warringah Sea Eagles CoE, the redevelopment of Sydney's Concord Oval and new home for West Tigers, plus C.ex Coffs Harbour Stadium and a new Sporting Complex at West Woolgoolga on the NSW north coast.

The project is now entering the construction phase, with Richard Crookes appointed as the head contractor. The new facility is scheduled for completion in time for the 2022 rugby league pre-season.

## Electrodry opens Storage Facility at Bennetts Green

Electrodry recently expanded its offerings, opening the doors of a brand new 6000 sqm Electrodry Storage Facility at 55 Pacific Highway, Bennetts Green.

Electrodry Storage Solutions comprises more than 450 units available for lease, with sizes ranging from a compact 6 sqm up to an impressive 27 sqm unit.

Site manager Jenny Barrie said every effort has been made to ensure that the booking and storing process is simple and that stored items are safe and secure.

"Customers are offered a month-to-month flexible booking arrangement with an individualised security pin for access," Jenny said.

"There is video surveillance as well, and the easy access driveway is located opposite the new Bunnings Warehouse for added convenience."



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## Architectural excellence recognised at 2021 Hunter Architecture Awards

The winners of the 2021 Hunter Architecture Awards were announced via a virtual livestream event on Friday 19 March on the Australian Institute of Architects' YouTube channel. Jury chair Philip Pollard of AMENITY urban & natural environments said "The calibre of

projects entered in this year's awards program demonstrates the high standard of architecture being produced in the Newcastle region. Without exception, each project demonstrated remarkable levels of collaboration between architects and their clients, in both the private and public sector realms, to deliver outstanding examples of innovation, creativity and adaptation."

House at Pretty Beach by lahznimmo architects received top honours, collecting the prestigious Newcastle Architecture Medal and Award for Residential Architecture – Houses (New). The steep bush site of this remarkable home, located on Bouddi Peninsula, sat vacant for several decades due to its many challenging constraints. The site and its sensitive flora and fauna were respected throughout the seven year design process to deliver a remarkable building with minimal disturbance – durable elegance and beauty, executed with great restraint.

Valencia Street by Curious Practice collected the Award for Residential Architecture – Houses (Alterations and Additions) and a Commendation for Sustainable Architecture for its transformation of an original cottage in Mayfield. New openings in existing brick walls knit together previously disconnected public spaces of the house, connecting them to both the street and rear garden.

SJB's Lume, the winner of the Award for Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing, was distinguished by its focus on permeability and overt fluted gestures, which successfully disrupt the multi-residential

typology in Newcastle's Honeysuckle foreshore with an injection of colour, texture, and sense of place.

The Award for Public Architecture was bestowed upon the Maitland Regional Athletics Complex, a collaboration between Maitland City Council Architects and Studio Dot. The multi-function enclosed space, which forms part of the larger recreational masterplan, serves as a competition-standard regional athletics facility and invites a broad range of community uses.

The Newcastle Visitor Information Centre by EJE Architecture collected the Award for Heritage for its adaptive reuse of the former Civic Station building, which forms part of the HCCDC Museum Place area near the harbour foreshore, built in 1937. Its transformation is the result of an admirable collaboration between the architect and its end users to deliver a space that preserves both social and architectural heritage.

Fronte Oceano by Anthony St John Parson received the Award for Interior Architecture. Though small in area, each volume of the 150-year-old terrace home represents a curated, collaborative approach between the architect and their client to evoke a sense of adventure, light, and art in motion.

The COLORBOND Award for Steel Architecture and a Commendation for Public Architecture were awarded to Port Stephens HealthOne by SHAC for its approach in utilising steel to navigate fire, termite and flood considerations, of a scale and texture that reflect Tomaree's coastal environment.

In addition to the eight awards, the jury recognised other exemplary projects in Newcastle with commendations going to: The Big Tree House by Curious Practice for Educational Architecture, Alma Residences by CKDS Architecture for Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing, Wangi Waterfront House by SHAC and Lambton House by Curious Practice for Residential Architecture – Houses (New), Cliff Cottage by Dianna Thomas Architect and Hatherly House by SDA for Residential Architecture – Houses (Alterations and Additions).

**EJE** architecture

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NEWCASTLE VISITOR  
INFORMATION CENTRE





*The winner of the Award for Heritage Architecture:  
Newcastle Visitor Information Centre by EJE Architecture  
Photographer: Nathan Dawes*

### **Full list of winners:**

#### **Newcastle Architecture Medal:**

House at Pretty Beach by lahznimmo architects

#### **Educational Architecture:**

Commendation to The Big Tree House by Curious Practice

#### **Award for Heritage Architecture:**

Newcastle Visitor Information Centre by EJE Architecture

#### **Award for Interior Architecture:**

Fronte Oceano by Anthony St John Parsons

#### **Award for Public Architecture:**

Maitland Regional Athletics Complex by Maitland City Council Architects and Studio Dot

**Commendation** to Port Stephens Healthone by SHAC

#### **Award for Residential Architecture – Houses (Alterations and Additions):**

Valencia Street by Curious Practice

**Commendations** to Cliff Cottage by Dianna Thomas Architect and Hatherley House by SDA

**Award for Residential Architecture (New):** House at Pretty Beach by lahznimmo architects

**Commendations** to Wangi Waterfront House by SHAC and Lambton House by Curious Practice

#### **Award for Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing:**

Lume by SJB

**Commendation** to Alma Residences by CKDS Architecture

#### **Sustainable Architecture:**

Commendation to Valencia Street by Curious Practice

#### **Colorbond Award for Steel Architecture:**

Port Stephens Healthone for SHAC



## PM 'thumbs up' on Port of Newcastle diversification plans

Port of Newcastle CEO Craig Carmody met with the Prime Minister at Carrington on 4 March to discuss matters critical to future investment in the region and its port.

Mr Carmody welcomed the Prime Minister's sweeping

support for the Port of Newcastle's \$2.4 billion Multipurpose Deepwater Terminal (MDT), which is set to create 15,000 jobs and \$2.5 billion of gross domestic product during the construction phase alone.

The Prime Minister's visit is reflective of the importance of the port to the economy and the relevance of our diversification plans to the government's agenda. Mr Carmody took the opportunity to talk to the Prime Minister about how the Commonwealth can support PON's diversification plans in a number of areas for the benefit of the region and the nation.

The Prime Minister also discussed with Mr Carmody the National Energy Resources Australia (NERA) announcement of the Hunter Hydrogen Technology Cluster and the importance for the region. Mr Carmody noted that the Port had an important role to play in facilitating new and emerging markets such as hydrogen and that the Commonwealth Government's support has been important in establishing this as a viable opportunity.

The MDT remains an exciting project that will turbo-charge the local economy to the tune of \$1.3 billion and create a more cost-competitive supply chain for NSW businesses that trade internationally. Once penalties on container trade through the port are removed, Port of Newcastle is keen to move forward with the project and fuel the jobs and economic opportunities it will bring with it.



## Thermal treatment plant for hazardous wastes

Weston Thermal Solutions (WTS), a fully owned subsidiary of Weston Aluminium Pty Ltd, is in the process of commissioning an innovative thermal processing facility at Kurri Kurri for medical and other waste.

WTS was established in 2019 as part of diversification beyond

traditional service provision to aluminium and steel manufacturing sectors. The construction of the new facility follows earlier trial successes for the thermal destruction of pharmaceutical and illicit drug wastes.

The state-of-the-art, purpose-built facility incorporates refrigerated storage, a PLC-controlled, two-stage natural gas-fired combustion process and real-time air emissions monitoring and control systems. The air emissions standards are the most stringent for any waste facility in NSW.

Wastes accepted include medical, quarantine waste, solvents and paints, documents and pitch sludge residues. The design throughput is up to 800 kg of waste per hour.

The facility is licenced to accept and treat:

- NA - Clinical and related waste - Pathogenic substances
- R120 - Waste pharmaceuticals, drugs and medicines
- NA - Paper documents
- J100 - Oily rags

- J160 - Waste tarry residues - Pitch sludge residues
- J120 - Waste oil/hydrocarbons mixtures/emulsions in water-Pitch sludge residues
- G160 - Organic solvent and paint from production
- G150 - Halogenated solvent and paint
- G110 - Organic solvent and paint
- F110 - Resin, latex, plasticiser, glue and adhesive
- F100 - Ink, dye pigment, paint, lacquer and varnish
- T100 - Waste chemicals from R&D or teaching activities
- R150 - Quarantine waste
- R140 - Production and preparation of pharmaceuticals
- R130 - Cytotoxic
- R100 - Clinical and related waste
- R120 - Illicit drug and pharmaceuticals

The facility also produces resource recovery of ash residues and scrap metals.

Beyond commissioning, WTS is seeking to further broaden the waste input types and increase operating scale further.



## Contribution of mining to Hunter Economy increases in 2019-20

The NSW Minerals Council's latest annual member Expenditure Survey has found that in the last financial year the 28 participating mining companies directly injected \$6.2 billion into the Hunter economy, supporting over 13,000 Hunter mining jobs and over 3,400 local mining supplier businesses.

"These survey results show that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, mining's contribution to the Hunter economy last year remained strong, with jobs relatively stable, more direct mining spending, and an increase in the number of Hunter mining supplier businesses," NSW Minerals Council CEO, Stephen Galilee said.

While the 13,000 Hunter mining jobs supported by our member companies was around the same as the previous year, the \$6.2 billion in direct spending in the Hunter represented an increase of around \$800 million.

In addition, the 3,400 mining supplier businesses in the last financial year represented an increase of 126 businesses compared to the previous year.

The Survey results once again confirm the Hunter's ongoing status as the biggest mining region in NSW. NSW Mining Council mining member companies directly spent \$15 billion in total in NSW in 2019-20 and the \$6.2 billion in direct spending in the Hunter was the largest of any region.

The \$6.2 billion in direct spending is estimated to have contributed around 28 percent of the Gross Regional Product of the Hunter economy in 2019-20. This is a significant contribution by any measure, and up from 23 percent the previous year.

"The overall improvement in the economic boost for the Hunter provided by our member companies highlights the resilience of our industry during these tough times, keeping our mines operating while maintaining the safety of our miners, their families and our mining communities across NSW."





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## New Civic Square for Muswellbrook

Muswellbrook Council has announced that its continued revitalisation of Muswellbrook's town centre will include a multi-use precinct with quality retail, commercial, civic, cultural, entertainment, education and community amenities.

The Muswellbrook Town Centre Masterplan features a Civic Square which would link the education precinct which includes the Muswellbrook Library, the University of Newcastle Upper Hunter campus, TAFE Town campus and Upper Hunter Innovation Hub with the cultural precinct which includes the Conservatorium of Music and the proposed Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre.

Additionally, the Square will include an open Town Green, eateries including cafes and small bars as well as additional surface and underground car parking.

Deputy Mayor, Cr Rod Scholes, said:

"This project is central to bringing the community together, highlighting important Aboriginal and European heritage, and building a strong and proud identity in the heart of the town.

Well preserved heritage buildings, modern new additions and welcoming outdoor public spaces and facilities are all elements of the proposed Civic Square.

One of the key elements to come out of a series of community forums held during the development process was a lack of "green" public spaces in town. The multi-functional Civic Square and Town Green will encourage community congregation and accommodate cultural events, performances, seasonal events and activities such as Anzac services and Christmas markets."



## Chloe is breaking the mould in the construction industry

A young Cooranbong woman has built her carpentry skills into a career by starting an apprenticeship with Stafford Constructions Lake Macquarie.

The NSW Government is paving the way for more women and mature workers to take up trades, with a \$57.4 million commitment for a new Trades Skills Pathways Centre in the 2020-21 NSW Budget. According to the Australian Government Job Outlook, women currently make up only 1% of Carpenters.

Now in her third year of studying the Certificate III in Carpentry at TAFE NSW Belmont, 19-year-old Chloe Gray is the only female apprentice in her class but that is not something that deters her from succeeding.

"My TAFE NSW teacher is fantastic at explaining everything with a lot of depth. I am really enjoying my apprenticeship, I learn something every day, and it is great being able to put in practice



the skills that I learn through my course."

After learning the basics of carpentry from her parents, who flip houses, Chloe grew a strong interest in woodwork and working with her hands.

"It's a satisfying feeling figuring out how to build a structure that is fit for purpose."

Stafford Constructions Owner Marty Stafford said "Chloe is a true professional with a refreshing perspective on both construction and problem solving. Chloe's work ethic and the work she produces is a positive reflection on the industry in general.

"We ensure our staff are trained by TAFE NSW because they provide first-class training and are the largest and most well-established training provider in the country."

Chloe's advice to other women who are considering a trade-based career is "If you're thinking about it and you're passionate about it, then just do it, create your own path. I now have the privilege to be able to do what I love every day."

## Three Port Stephens women awarded International Women's Day Scholarships



Port Stephens International Women's Day Scholarship recipients Elle Clayton-Brown, Bernadette Flynn and Nikita Austin

Three Port Stephens women have been awarded \$1000 to achieve their goals of connecting seniors, surfing on the world stage and creating inclusive programs for children and adults thanks to Council's International Women's Day Scholarships.

Nikita Austin, Elle Clayton-Brown and Bernadette Flynn were announced as the 2021 scholarship recipients at a ceremony last month. An initiative of Port Stephens Council, Mayor Ryan Palmer said the scholarships are a wonderful way to celebrate the women in our community.

"Our International Women's Day Scholarships are designed to support local women and the valuable contribution they make to Port Stephens.

"It's just one of the ways we can help change the future and celebrate those who are leading the way to an equal tomorrow.

"I want to congratulate our three scholarship recipients and all of the amazing applicants — I was overwhelmed by the calibre of women that applied.

"There are so many worthy women across our region who deserve one of these scholarships, so it's hard to pick just 3.

"I also want to thank former Councillor Sally Dover for her hard work and perseverance to make this scholarships program possible 4 years ago," he said.

Councillor Sarah Smith said it was an honour to announce the winners.

"International Women's Day is a time to celebrate women's achievements, raise awareness against bias and take action for equality.

"These scholarships are a small way that Port Stephens Council is helping to create opportunities for local women.

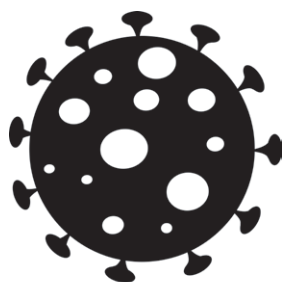
"Nikita Austin of Salamander Bay is a speech pathologist and proud Indigenous woman who is creating inclusive holiday programs for children and adults with additional needs.

"Corlette's Elle Clayton-Brown is a first year nursing student and competitive surfer who is pursuing her dreams of surfing on the world stage.

"Bernadette Flynn is a full time carer from Medowie who wants to connect and engage Port Stephens seniors through craft classes at retirement villages and aged care facilities.

"I want to congratulate our incredible scholarship recipients — I'm excited to see how they achieve their goals and do great things with their scholarship funds in 2021," Cr Smith said.

## City of Newcastle Budget confirms Newcastle on the road to recovery from COVID 19



The draft Budget forecasts a \$1.2 million surplus over the next year, while still delivering a near record \$90.4 million infrastructure program that includes the restoration of the Newcastle Ocean Baths, the revitalisation of the Wallsend Town Centre, a commercial standard organics facility to recycle residential food waste and the continued delivery of the Bathers Way project from Merewether to Nobbys Beach.

Importantly, the accompanying Long Term Financial Plan indicates that the Budget will remain in surplus for the next 10 years at least, allowing the City to continue to support existing services and invest in new and upgraded infrastructure.

The \$330 million Budget, which outlines the City's planned actions for 2021/22, was tabled at the 23 March council meeting, with Councillors voting to place it on public exhibition for community feedback for four weeks from 26 March.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes said the draft Budget has been carefully balanced to allow the City to continue supporting the community's recovery from COVID-19 while also providing the services and infrastructure needed to support the economic and population growth of the city.

"During COVID-19, Council made brave decisions to provide financial relief and support for vulnerable groups and business, and to expand existing services, while increasing investment in projects to stimulate the local economy and support jobs," Cr Nemes said.

"Those efforts allowed us to deliver a \$5.5 million Community Economic and Resilience Package in March last year, weeks before either the NSW or Federal Governments were in a position to respond with support programs and stimulus measures.

"These crucial decisions were only possible due to our strong financial sustainability, a legacy of six consecutive surplus Budgets prior to COVID-19 sending the national economy into recession last March.

"This year, we will spend \$330 million in what is a commitment to deliver services and infrastructure that support our city and natural environment as an inclusive and sustainable place to live and work, now and into the future.

"Investment in services across the city is a key priority under the Budget, with \$13.7 million for upgrades to local roads, bridges and footpaths and \$9.1 million for new and improved parks, playgrounds, sporting and aquatic facilities including the much anticipated Wallsend active hub.

"The City will continue to upgrade local town centres, with \$8.1 million marked for projects including the Wallsend CBD and along Orchardtown Road in New Lambton.

"A strong focus on environmental sustainability will see \$10.5 million allocated to a range of projects including \$2 million for Stockton Beach sand renourishment to protect property and maintain beach amenity, while the NSW Government continues to test the quality of sand mined offshore for the purpose of rebuilding Stockton Beach."



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## The Mutual Bank brings Apple Pay to members

CEO, Geoff Seccombe, said Apple Pay gives members a safe, secure, and private way to pay with their iPhone or Apple Watch. Mr Seccombe said introducing Apple Pay is part of The Mutual Bank's ongoing product development and innovation strategy, to give customers a range of convenient, secure banking products and services. On the digital front, that includes Internet Banking, its App, and now Apple Pay.

He said COVID-19 has made contactless payments even more important.

"Apple Pay helps members avoid handing their payment card to someone else, touching physical buttons or exchanging cash — and uses the power of iPhone to protect every transaction," Mr Seccombe said.

"With Apple Pay being widely accepted, members can use it in the supermarket, a taxi, restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores, as well as paying for online shopping or parking," he said.

"Members simply hold their iPhone or Apple Watch near a payment terminal to make a contactless payment. Every Apple Pay purchase is secure because it is authenticated with Face ID, Touch ID, or device passcode, as well as a one-time unique dynamic security code.

"Members can also use Apple Pay on iPhone, iPad, and Mac to make faster and more convenient purchases in apps or on the web in Safari without having to create accounts or repeatedly type in shipping and billing information."

Mr Seccombe said security and privacy are at the core of Apple Pay and it is easy to set up.

"When members use a credit or debit card with Apple Pay, the actual card numbers are not stored on the device, nor on Apple servers."

"Our branch staff or call centre staff can easily help members set up Apple Pay."

*The Mutual Bank's Payments & Settlements Manager Nicole Richardson and CEO Geoff Seccombe*



## ARTC supports Lifeline counselling service

Face-to-face counselling is an additional service to Lifeline's 13 11 14 crisis support line.

ARTC Group Executive Hunter Valley Network, Wayne Johnson, said the partnership was an effective and tangible way to extend support to people in the local community in their time of need.

Mr Johnson said ARTC's value of "No Harm" underpins

Members of Hunter-based, The Mutual Bank have been able to start using Apple Pay from 2 March. The Mutual Bank is the only locally based bank to offer the service to customers.

everything ARTC does.

"The health and safety of our team, both physical and mental, is ARTC's number one priority, and we take that very seriously," Mr Johnson said.

"Good mental health is vital, and we have invested in it internally by offering staff an Employee Assistance Program, and upskilling mental health support providers within our team," he said.

"This partnership with Lifeline helps us to play our part in achieving wellbeing in the community."

Lifeline's Regional General Manager, Julie Wicks, said the support from ARTC is vital for it to be able to continue its free face-to-face counselling program. Ms Wicks said the pandemic had brought increased demand for support from Lifeline.

She said confidential, one-hour sessions are delivered by Lifeline trained counsellors and are an important service to help people move beyond crisis and to also prevent people from reaching that crisis point.

Ms Wicks said the partnership with ARTC extends beyond its generous funding support. ARTC staff also volunteered at Lifeline's upcoming local book fair on April 10 and 11 at the Newcastle Showground Exhibition Centre.

"This partnership embodies our approach to work with community for communities to be suicide safe - through connection, compassion and hope," Ms Wicks said.

Lifeline's free face-to-face counselling is offered Monday to Friday at Islington and at outreach locations in Singleton, Raymond Terrace and Cessnock. To make an appointment call 1300 152 854.

Lifeline's crisis support line 13 11 14 operates 24-hours a day.

*Lifeline's Julie Wicks and ARTC's Wayne Johnson*



## New Gillieston Heights Community Hub now open

Construction of the new Gillieston Heights Community Hub is officially complete and available for community bookings.

This sophisticated and modern, state of the art community venue provides a range of multifunctional spaces

for hire and is an exciting community asset which will bring local services and groups together in one central and convenient location. The venue includes an office, two meeting rooms and two activity rooms suitable for a range of services, meetings, functions and social and recreational activities.

Located on the corner of Redwood Drive and Pine Street, the Gillieston Heights Community Hub is equipped with adaptive and multifunctional features to suit both commercial operators and community groups, and is available for hire for the growing community.

Mayor of Maitland Loretta Baker says, "The Gillieston Heights Community Hub is a fantastic addition to the diverse range of venues and facilities that Council offers across Maitland to cater to the needs of our growing Gillieston Heights community and neighbouring areas.

"The state of the art facility offers the community a place where people can come together for a range of activities, programs and events that foster a sense of community connection, place and pride."

# THE SOUND OF THE HUNTER

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## UoN launches framework in commitment to Indigenous research

On 18 March the University of Newcastle unveiled a major piece in its longstanding commitment to Indigenous higher education, innovation and engagement with the launch of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research

Framework, coinciding with national Close the Gap Day.

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Leadership, Mr Nathan Towney said the Framework brought together the ambitious plans from across the University to improve the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, students and staff.

"Cultural knowledge and understanding is at the centre of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research Framework. It guides every initiative, ensuring we are culturally responsive.

"Building on all our earlier work and achievements, we are focused on engaging the entire University community in the process of breathing life into the visions shared in this plan," he said.

Mr Towney said the Framework placed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities at its heart and would guide the University's work over the coming years.

"We are determined to be a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge is woven into each aspect of the University - our relationships with communities, the way we teach, learn and research and how we foster reconciliation in our regions.

"It's my hope that all members of our University community can find their role in the work that lies ahead of us," Mr Towney said.

The Framework will provide a roadmap for staff in planning, implementing and evaluating activities across the University.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and research are a whole of university commitment - it is everyone's responsibility. It is how all of us, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, can learn, research and apply Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being," Mr Towney said.

The Framework is interconnected with a number of University strategies and plans, its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the higher education sector, and the broader community - and focuses on four pillars:

- Cultural knowledge and understanding
- Research to influence change
- Engagement and community collaboration for reconciliation
- Evaluating success

## Hunter Green Hydrogen Hub to drive jobs, investment and a Net Zero Future

The Hunter is set to become the home of one of the State's first green hydrogen hubs with the NSW Government committing at least \$70 million to their development.

Energy Minister Matt Kean said the Hunter is a key site for these developments due to its access to

existing energy infrastructure, sustainable water sources, ports and logistics capabilities and a future supply of cheap, reliable renewable energy.

"This is a win-win for our state, by investing in hydrogen hubs we will kick-start jobs and infrastructure opportunities in NSW while simultaneously contributing to our Net Zero by 2050 goal," Mr Kean said.

"The Hunter Hydrogen Hub will drive new low carbon jobs and help to set up the region for the future."

Touring the Hunter, Mr Kean and Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter, Taylor Martin met with key stakeholders including the University of Newcastle's Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER).

Hydrogen hubs will provide groups of hydrogen users common

infrastructure for the local production, use and distribution of hydrogen. They will reduce costs by delivering hydrogen in a coordinated fashion.

Developing green hydrogen hubs aligns with planned NSW Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, ensuring they become thriving business precincts.

"By 2050, green hydrogen has the potential to drive \$350 billion in investment across Australia in current dollars and up to \$26 billion per year in additional GDP, supporting the emergence of new decarbonised industries such as green steel and ammonia," Mr Kean said.

Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter, Taylor Martin said the green hydrogen hub will be a significant boost by providing opportunities for the Hunter to innovate and diversify its industry.

"The Hunter is already an energy powerhouse and a hydrogen industry will mean new jobs and investment in the region as well as creating new markets for export," Mr Martin said.

The Hunter is set to become one of two key regions in NSW to benefit from becoming a green hydrogen hub. The other region is south of Sydney in the Illawarra where many of the same access to ports, logistics, existing energy infrastructure and future renewable energy resources are also available.

## Hunter could be caught-short by early power station closures

The reports of early coal-fired power station closures in the region should trigger accelerated diversification efforts for the Hunter, including the establishment of the Hunter 2050 Foundation.

That's according to the Hunter Joint Organisation (JO), who said warnings from Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) Executives to expect closures to occur soon, alongside recent writedowns for the region's largest energy and coal producers, sends a clear signal that economic risks are accelerating.

"The time to respond to these risks is now," Hunter JO Chair and Mayor of Cessnock, Cr Bob Pynsent said today.

"These power station closures could happen quickly, and frankly, I don't think we are ready for the changes that would flow. It's not just the jobs at the power stations themselves, but the flow-on impacts on businesses in supply chains, and facilities such as the Tomago smelter that rely on local energy.

"Don't forget that we also have \$1b in Australian coal stuck off the coast of China and we have seen some local miners have to pull back on production due to these and other issues."

In response, the Hunter JO is calling on state and federal government to fast-track investment in the region to make sure local families are not left exposed to changes occurring more quickly than anticipated.

Key investments include a commitment to the \$15m needed for the Hunter 2050 Foundation to drive new investment and preparedness programs as well as fast tracking the Hunter REZ and SAP initiatives.

Cr Sue Moore, Chair of the Hunter JO's Regional Economic Transition Standing Committee and Mayor of Singleton noted, "We need this investment to drive opportunities in new energy, agribusiness and defence."

"There is no reason for the region to miss a beat as our energy sector changes. Yet right now, we could be in a bit of trouble if things move quickly, as the AEMO have suggested, and we aren't ready."

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## Lake Mac legends honoured at award ceremony

Shining lights of Lake Macquarie's community have been recognised for their tireless service, talent and dedication as part of the annual Lake Mac Awards.

Disability services advocate Jonathon Power was named 2021 Lake Mac Ambassador at gala

ceremony held on 13 March at Belmont 16s for his work with people with disability and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. He established Lake Mac-based Empowered Community Services in 2017, taking inspiration from his years of support for both his parents, both of whom have lifelong disability.

"Jonathon has not only embraced the challenges in his life, but has used them as a driving force to help people in need and make the community a better place for everyone," Lake Macquarie Mayor Cr Kay Fraser said.

With profoundly deaf mum Amanda by his side, Mr Power said it was "a huge surprise" to win the award.

"I've grown up in Lake Macquarie my whole life, and to be recognised as someone to represent the City is an honour," he said.

"I want to make sure everyone is treated equally, that people with disability aren't stereotyped and to make sure the community is more inclusive as a whole."

Lake Macquarie Year 7 student Jasmine Seidel was named Lake Mac Young Citizen of 2021 for her years of selfless effort that bely her young age. The 11-year-old started raising money for charity aged just seven, and has since supported various organisations including the John Hunter Children's Hospital oncology ward, HeartKids and Multiple Sclerosis Limited.

NSW and Australian women's rugby league star Hannah Southwell was named Lake Mac Sports Star for 2021. She has vice-captained the NSW Origin team, won the 2020 Women's NRL



Rugby League Players Association Player of the Year award and has also represented Australia in rugby sevens and soccer.

NSW SES volunteer Christine Speer was recognised for her 40 years of service with the organisation, taking out the Lake Mac Volunteer of the Year award for outstanding community contribution.

Glendale Technology High School student Emily Jones won the Lake Mac Rising Sports Star award for her achievements in swimming, while Awesome Lake Mac, which provides financial support to community-led projects and activities, was named Community Group of the Year.

Circular economy pioneer Samantha Cross was named 2021 Lake Mac Environmental Leader. Her Plastic Police local community engagement program has saved more than 65 million pieces of soft plastics from landfill since its inception in 2015.

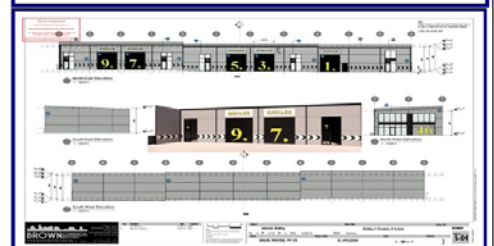
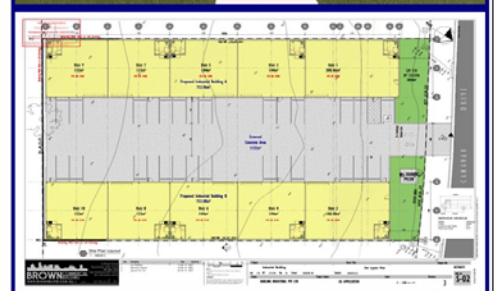
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Notes: 1. We have used our best endeavours to confirm the accuracy of this information yet provide no warranty for its correctness. All enquiries are to rely upon their own investigations.



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Let's Talk With.....

# NORMAN BALLARD



## 1. In a few words tell us about your current role.

I am currently the CEO at Senquip and Engineering Manager at Blue Zone Group. The two part time roles complement each other nicely. Senquip manufactures rugged, programmable telemetry devices that connect to any industrial sensor or system and transmit measured data back to the Senquip Portal or another server. In my role at Senquip, I spend most of my time engaging with customers, assisting them to implement novel remote monitoring solutions. At Blue Zone Group, I manage a team of engineers who are engaged in the design of Remote and Autonomous Systems for defence customers. Senquip, being commercial, offers a fast-paced environment where development cycles are quick, and we deal with new customers and applications every day. At Blue Zone Group, the engineering that results in leading edge defence products that typically operate underwater is more considered and design cycles are expectedly longer. As an engineer with a far left lean to commerce and entrepreneurship, the two roles offer different, rewarding outcomes.

## 2. How have you reached this point in your professional life?

I studied Electronics Engineering at the University of Cape Town, a beautiful old colonial campus on the Southern tip of Africa. After completing a Masters Degree, I settled in as an engineer at General Electric, designing fire detectors. I loved being an engineer and worked through far too many nights to get a product ready for a customer, for certification or for production. One day I got a call from Avnet, a global semiconductor supplier and was asked if I could attend an interview in Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa, miles from beautiful Cape Town. There started my career in marketing and sales. At Avnet, I marketed Motorola semiconductors and was soon promoted to run the semiconductor division as a Director. I was then approached by Motorola to act as country manager for their semiconductor division. It was in this role that I was exposed to thousands of small electronics companies and learned to very quickly to evaluate their chance of survival. The common denominator was that the successful ones had a passionate engineer and an even more passionate marketer. An occupational hazard of working in Africa is that you do tend to get shot at every now and then. With a young family, it was decided to move to a safer environment; looking around the world, Australia stood out in leaps and bounds. After arriving in Singleton (because it looked close to the sea on the map and we had family there), I soon found that there were not lots of electronics or marketing jobs. The only option was to start our own business. My wife and I started Hummingbird Electronics, a supplier of bespoke electronic product to the transport industry. We were successful and soon moved the business to a factory in Port Stephens from where we supplied product all around Australia and part of the world. After 10 years at Hummingbird, it was time to scale the business, and to do so, we sold to REDARC Electronics. REDARC are an amazing Australian success story, supplying automotive electronics, in volume all around the world. I worked with REDARC for 4 years, an amazing learning experience. REDARC do things properly; their engineering is thorough and the production facilities world class and better. At the end of the day, I remain an entrepreneur and so after 4 years, it was time to start something new. Senquip was started with a vision of becoming a premier manufacturer of telemetry devices in utilities, mining, and transport. Blue Zone exposes me to the whole new world of defence and the application of leading-edge technologies that support Navy.

## 3. When you're not at work, where can we find you?

Digging a hole in the garden, renovating a house, generally improving something. All engineers like creating things and so if it is not products and systems, why not houses and gardens. The sea also appeals to me, so if there is no wind, I like to go fishing just outside of Port Stephens, targeting tuna and small black marlin. If the wind blows a little, you will find me on my Lazer sailing dinghy and if the wind blows a lot, which is all of summer, I will be on my windsurfer.

## 4. Where do you find inspiration?

My inspiration comes from our customers. I get excited when I see them excited about our products and their application. I am also inspired by technology. At Senquip, we make no compromises in producing the best telemetry devices available, using the latest available components. At BlueZone, we are attempting things that have never been tried before, pushing the boundaries of the possible.

## 5. What advice would you give to someone just starting out in your field?

Work out why you did engineering. There is a difference between a career engineer and one that has a passion. Both have a place in the world and can have rewarding careers. But if you do not have passion, then do not enter research and development as the hours will be long and the work challenging. Do not even think of starting a business.

As a young entrepreneurial engineer, get some experience before you start your own business. Go work in a business similar to the one that you would like to own and learn all that you can. Once you have learned engineering, learn sales, and then learn business. If, along the way, you find that you do not like engaging with people, do not start a business. Grants are not real income. Good for you if you manage to get a government grant to start your business. But grants are not customers and just because you have convinced a department to give you money does not mean that customers will.

Be honest with yourself, is your product really unique, why is it unique, will anyone want it – honest! Ask customers why they would want it and how much they would pay for it, and then ask them to buy it! If they do not buy it, you do not have a product.

Starting a business is not for everyone and that is ok.

## 6. What's something most people don't know about you?

I was a very happy engineer at General Electric in Cape Town. I only accepted the interview with Avnet because my then girlfriend's sister was getting married in Johannesburg (1800km away) and a free flight was appealing. I was very taken aback when I got the job. In retrospect it is the best thing that ever happened to me as it forced a very conservative engineer to talk to people, and that experience has shaped my career since.

## 7. How would you like to see the Hunter evolve over the next decade?

The first thing that comes to mind is that I would like to see the reliance on coal for jobs to be lessened. I am not anti-coal per se, but the writing is on the wall, the world is going renewable.

Manufacturing is an obvious transition for Newcastle, with a great port and airport, excellent road links and a high-capacity power network. Wonderful to see all the defence related development around Williamstown and the jobs that it will create. I am thrilled that a battery manufacturing plant is being established in Tomago. I do wonder where the wind turbine manufacturers and large-scale solar fabricators are. Education of the next generation will be key to our transition away from coal jobs into technology. The University of Newcastle is doing a fabulous job of attracting students from all over the world and is producing graduates that are feeding local industry and start-ups. It is excellent that the University manages to attract so many foreign students; it would be even more excellent to see our Hunter locals filling those spots too. The Hunter has everything, without the congestion of Sydney. I join the Newcastle council in their vision of Newcastle as a technology centre. I hope to play just a small part on the technology roadmap that sees Newcastle as the technology manufacturing hub of Australia.

## 8. What's your favourite Hunter restaurant/café/bar?

The Deck in Soldiers Point

## 9. What's the best line from a film you've ever heard?

Not sure it is from a film, but I love the phrase "the harder you work, the luckier you get"



# Builders working for residential owner occupiers now covered by the Security of Payment Act

**Bryce Richards**  
**Keystone Lawyers**

Residential builders who contract directly with owner occupiers will benefit from now being covered by the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 1999 (Security of Payment Act).

Owner occupiers were exempt from the Act until March 1, 2021. That changed when the NSW Government released the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Regulation 2020 ("the Regulation").

## What is the Security of Payment Act?

The Act sets out payment requirements in the building and construction industry that principals, head contractors, subcontractors and suppliers must follow. All contractors providing goods or services for construction work have the right to receive 'progress payments' for work delivered. It sets down maximum payment deadlines and the option of adjudication if payment is not made on time.

## How does the Act benefit residential builders?

The Act will help many residential builders improve cashflow by being able to obtain more regular payments. It will also help to solve payment disputes more easily and cost effectively.

The Act gives residential builders the right to make a claim for payment from owner occupiers on the last day of each month from when work commences. This is a useful tool for residential builders as under Housing Industry Association (HIA) and Master builders Association (MBA) standard contracts builders can usually only claim payment after completing certain stages of work.

Owner occupiers must respond with a payment schedule within 10 business days (or an earlier time frame set out in the contract) setting out the amount they propose to pay and, if the amount is less than the full amount of the claim for payment, their reasons why.

If builders do not receive a payment schedule within that time they can suspend works by giving two days notice in writing. They also have two other options.

- Create a statutory debt and take legal proceedings to recover the money. The owner-occupier cannot raise any defence or cross-claim about matters arising out of the contract
- Give the owners five more business days to respond with a payment schedule or proceed to adjudication.

If a builder receives a payment schedule from an owner occupier that they disagree with, they have 10 business days to apply for adjudication of their claim through an authorised nominating authority (such as Adjudicate Today). Adjudication is generally much quicker and less expensive than recovering payments through the Courts or the NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). An enforceable determination usually takes three to four weeks after lodging the Adjudication Application.

## What do residential builders have to do to be covered under the Act?

To be covered by the Act, builders' claims for payment must state that they are being made pursuant to the Act and accurately describe the works. Builders should include these words on their invoice. "This is a payment claim made pursuant to the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act".

**For more information contact Bryce at (02) 4915 9950 or email [bryce@keystonelawyers.com.au](mailto:bryce@keystonelawyers.com.au).**



**Bryce Richards** is Managing Lawyer at Keystone Lawyers – a Hunter-based firm specialising in construction law.



# Manufacturing a recovery for the Hunter, and for Australia

**Larry Platt**  
**Advitech Group**

It goes without saying that the global pandemic has changed the way we operate – as individuals and as businesses.

While some industries have sought to pivot and others simply switched to survival mode, many saw an increase in business: just talk to your local cyclist retailer or home renovation specialist. However, some sectors are anticipating a benefit which will likely play out over a more extended period, catalysed by the shift in values and culture which COVID-19 has brought about.

No one is going to deny that the Australian manufacturing industry was in a bad way. In the 1980s, when manufacturing was the biggest employer in Australia, the sector comprised of 16.5% of the workforce, and today that figure stands at just 6.4% – representing a drop in GDP contribution of around 20%.

All that looked to change in 2020, when the global pandemic revealed the insecurity of the global supply chain upon which we as a nation rely. We were all seeing a shortage of drugs, of everyday items, of toys on the shelves at Christmas – the weakness was exposed. There are still shortages of many items – including life-saving pharmaceuticals – across the country.

In response to these shortages, and to the shifting post-COVID economic landscape, the Morrison Government released their four-year Modern Manufacturing Strategy in October 2020, which proposes to, 'make Australian manufacturers more competitive, resilient and able to scale-up and take on the world'. At the centrepiece of the strategy is a \$1.3 billion Modern Manufacturing Initiative, which will support projects across Australia's key areas of priority (resources technology and critical minerals processing, food and beverage, medical products, recycling and clean energy, defence, and space).

The strategy is an exciting gateway for new business opportunities, and as any Novocastrian engineer will tell you, the Hunter is in prime position to take them up. We have the resources: water, the port, transport, and energy: the biggest risk to manufacturing is dispatchable power and the region is already becoming a major player in renewables. Indeed, construction of

the country's largest battery is scheduled to soon commence just south of Newcastle at Eraring.

It's not just the Hunter's resources which are valuable at this time, but our people. The Hunter has a long history of manufacturing, and we have the culture too. I believe that the Hunter workforce is ready for the changes we are seeing across the region. Newcastle already has a wealth of engineering talent: much of which is represented at Advitech itself. Of course, as well as the Hunter's established engineering organisations, there's a push to bring new entrepreneurs and innovators to the region too, as part of the City's 'Smarter Living' initiative. Those working in manufacturing in the Hunter are here at the right time and in the right place.

Despite the Hunter's advantageous position, the work won't just land in our hands: we need to continue to encourage entrepreneurial business growth, and foster agility across the STEM&M space. What we lack is a pro-active approach to attracting industry. At the moment we are very reactive – we can't just wait for overseas industries to become customers. When you're a small industry you know you need to approach people, that's what we learned very early on at Advitech. You've got to be noticed.

**For further information contact Advitech on (02) 4924 5400, email [mail@advitech.com.au](mailto:mail@advitech.com.au) or visit [www.advitech.com.au](http://www.advitech.com.au)**



**Larry Platt** is Executive Chairman and founder of The Advitech Group. He is a professional chemical engineer with a long history in the manufacturing and chemical processing sectors, and specialist skills in risk and dangerous goods. He founded Advitech in 1987 in response to major restructuring in the manufacturing sector.

**HMA**

**Kristy Hedley**, Managing Director of the Hedweld Group of Companies, has joined the Hunter Manufacturing Awards (HMA) Board of Directors. Kristy brings a wealth of experience to the Board having worked in her family-owned company since 2007.

**JENNINGS PRINT GROUP**

**Debbi Henniker** has joined the Sales team at Jennings Print Group. With over 30 years' experience in the print industry, Debby has a strong focus on customer service and offering creative solutions for her clients requirements. With a deep understanding of both digital and offset printing, Debby will deliver the most effective option for each individual print project.

**HIA**

**Paul Le Mottee**, Managing Director at the Le Mottee Group and Deputy Mayor of Port Stephens Council has been elected the President of the Housing Industry Association (HIA) Hunter Region. A Hunter based surveyor and certifier with over 30 years' experience, Paul has become the HIA Hunter's 6th Regional President.

**HMA**

Hunter Manufacturing Awards (HMA) has welcomed **Brett Allen** to its Board of Directors. Brett is the General Manager – Supply Chain at Molycop and is accountable for the overall management of all Logistics, Purchasing and Supply Chain activities across the Australian Moly-Cop business.

LET US KNOW  
ABOUT  
YOUR PEOPLE!

**HMA**

**Frank Sammut** Executive Director of Central Coast Industry Connect has joined the Hunter Manufacturing Awards (HMA) Board as a director. Frank is a Mechanical Engineer with an impressive management and leadership career in the food manufacturing and engineering sectors.

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

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

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





## Report reveals steps to CBD revival

The Property Council of Australia and EY have launched a new “global playbook” for CBD revival. Reimagining our economic

powerhouses: How to turn CBDs into central experience districts draws on property industry data, interviews with business leaders and city shapers, and insights from 600 consumers.

The report finds that 82% of Australians are confident their nearest CBD will continue to evolve and presents six ideas to start that evolution.

The report recommends that government, employers and landlords work together to facilitate the return of people to the CBD via a series of targeted measures, including:

- Introduce free public transport and parking for workers on slow days, such as Mondays and Fridays.
- Facilitate events to activate streets and precincts with new late night shopping days or night-time markets, especially on weeknights.
- Reimagine unused space, with governments and landlords working together to fill empty floor space with pop-ups that add vibrancy
- Accelerate efforts to “green up” workplaces and streetscapes
- Offer commuters more micro-mobility solutions such as cycling, walking, e-bikes or scooters.

The key findings of the report also reveal individual attitudes towards CBDs:

- 61% of respondents have spent less time in their nearest CBD since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 62% believe that people will spend more time in their local neighbourhood post-pandemic

Many respondents believe that the CBD will continue to provide memorable experiences (65%), be an ideal place to meet in small groups (60%) or large groups (54%), frequent the best bars or restaurants (67%), shop for fashion (65%) or attend events and entertainment (63%).

70% of CBD office workers expect they will continue to work from home at least part of the week post-pandemic. The top aspects of working onsite include social interactions, collaboration opportunities, and greater separation of work and home life.

Surveyed CBD workers expect to work onsite on average 3.3 days, with Mondays and Fridays the least preferred days to attend the office.

Younger respondents (aged 18-35) were most likely to place importance in a CBD location for work (64%), with 48% of respondents overall sharing this view.

75% of respondents also claimed that employer premises and amenities are an important factor when choosing their next job.

Property Council of Australia Chief Executive, Ken Morrison, said the report was a blueprint for government, business and property owners to re-energise CBDs following the pandemic.

“Our CBDs have been the nation’s productivity powerhouses for decades, but have been sorely challenged by COVID-19 shutdowns. It’s important for everyone that CBDs are able to reclaim this economic mantle,” Mr Morrison said.

“As more workers return to CBD workplaces, it’s important to supercharge the revival of our CBDs to underpin economic recovery. This report provides the ideas that will be central to this task.”

“As this report finds, people love their CBDs and the vibrancy and opportunity they provide.

“Lively city centres are not only important for the thousands of businesses who rely on foot traffic, but also for millions of jobs and hundreds of billions of dollars in broader economic activity generated in our CBDs.”

“The employment, productivity and economic benefits of enlivened CBDs is immense. We want everyone with a stake in the future of our CBDs to engage in this conversation,” Mr Morrison added.

Selina Short, EY Oceania Real Estate, Hospitality and Construction Managing Partner, said Australia’s success in handling the pandemic could set our CBDs up for long-term success.

“We can transform our places of business into centres of experience,” Ms Short said.

“How do we do this? We need to rethink quality and reimagine the workplace, introduce more green space, embrace future mobility, amplify our Brand Australia message and more.

“Australia is in an enviable position. We are among the first in the world to restart our CBD engines. This gives us an unrivalled opportunity to write the global playbook for CBD revival – and to become a best practice hub for the world,” Ms Short concluded.

The joint report by Property Council of Australia and EY was launched on 31 March 2021 at a Property Council event.

The findings and conclusions are based on Property Council of Australia data, a survey of 600 CBD users, references to 98 academic papers, and interviews with 26 big thinkers with local and international perspectives.

## Industrial vacancies increase due to more development

**Steve Dick**  
**Movable**

The latest Moveable Industrial vacancy rate for the Lower Hunter Region rose to 6.43% from its pre-pandemic level of 5.91%.

The rise in vacancies is not an unexpected result given the local economy’s jam 12 months ago. However, we cannot blame COVID entirely for rising vacancies. An explosion in industrial development is a significant factor with an additional 20,064 square metres of industrial floor space now added, with more square metres expected in the next six months.

### Industrial development represents a new model for Newcastle

The speculative construction boom is not standard for the Hunter’s industrial sector. Speculators are using the ultra-low interest rates to build small industrial units to meet business owners’ desires to be owner-occupiers rather than tenants. For many private companies, a mortgage’s cost on an interest-only basis is far less (more than half) than the rent payable. In some circumstances, with an adequate deposit, the rent a business owner pays can even repay a principal and interest loan.

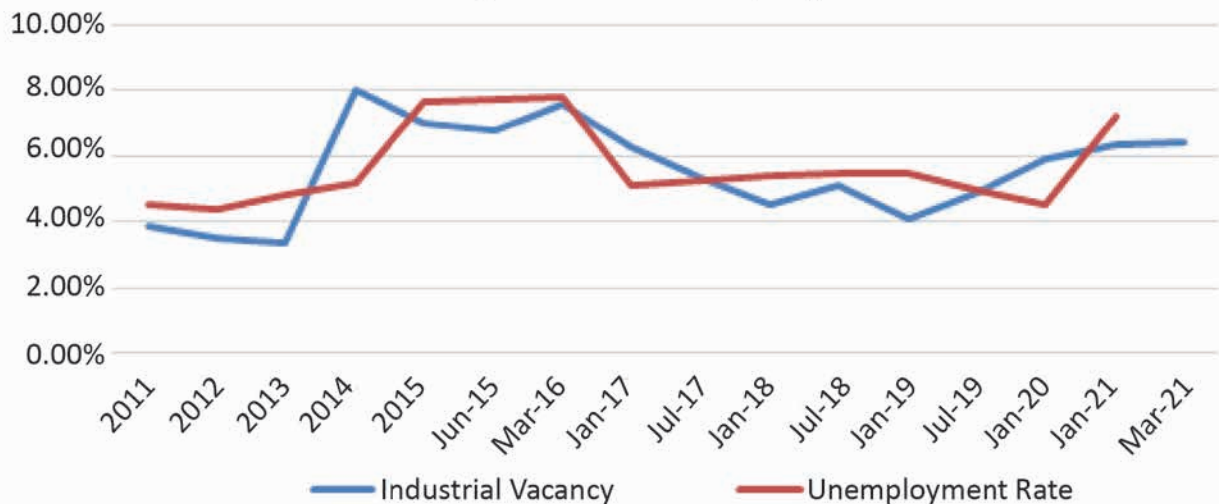
Traditionally, the Hunter region develops industrial buildings only as required for specific purposes. The current speculation has caused some major developers to withdraw their land, only to sell the parcels with building and land contracts. In turn, this restriction of supply has seen an already aggressive industrial land market achieving prices almost double those of 18 months ago. This price tension adds to the cost base of new buildings and will add pressure on rents.

### HEZ can douse overheated market

There is one land project that can temper the overheated market. HEZ, the Hunter Economic Zone at Kurri Kurri. This industrial suburb is ready to go now, offering affordable land either for sale or lease from 1 to 120 hectares. At HEZ, owners can buy land and have their own builder or have the entire project turnkey, ready for them to walk in and plugin their machines and computers.

The traditional industrial suburbs have had mixed results, with vacancies decreasing in some of the estates and rising in others. In Cardiff, the vacancy has decreased to (3.4%) it’s lowest since January 2013, in part to the council supplied infrastructure, the Munibung Road extension. Tomago has also marginally improved.

## Industrial Vacancy Rates V Unemployment Rates



However, the standout improvers are Newcastle's inner suburbs as the need to support the expanding inner-city residential market with services has resulted in a strong absorption of vacant space.

**Industrial vacancies provide an employment barometer**

The Hunter's unemployment rate seems to be correlated to the industrial vacancy rate. This relationship demonstrates the importance of the industrial sector to our regional economy. See the chart above.

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**Steve Dick** is a director of Newcastle's leading residential and commercial real estate firm, Movable.



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## Strong market confidence carries new home sales into 2021

"New Home Sales increased in February 2021 to be 1.7 per cent higher than February last year, prior to the impact of COVID restrictions on new home sales," stated HIA's Economist, Angela Lillicrap.

The HIA New Home Sales report – a monthly survey of the largest volume home builders in the five largest states – is a leading indicator of future detached home construction.

"Sales in the three months to February 2021 were higher by 60.5% than in the same three months the previous year. This strong result reflects the significant impact of HomeBuilder on demand for detached housing," added Ms Lillicrap.

"HomeBuilder was the catalyst for improving consumer confidence in the housing market.

"A surge in sales was observed following the announcement of HomeBuilder in June 2020, which led to strong sales through to the end of 2020.

"In December 2020, there was a near record volume of new home sales as households rushed to finalise contracts to build a new home before the end of the \$25,000 grant.

"The full impact of the extension of the HomeBuilder grant, at a value of \$15,000, will not be observed until the end of March.

"To receive the HomeBuilder grant, construction is required to commence within six months of signing a contract to build. As a consequence, it is possible that builders will delay the signing of some contracts to allow for greater flexibility and more detailed planning of projects.

"For this reason we expect a surge in sales in March. Due to the lower grant offering, this surge will not be as large as the December 2020 surge.

"Record low interest rates and rising house prices are sustaining market confidence into 2021. This strong level of consumer confidence combined with the demographic shift to regional areas is driving ongoing demand for new detached homes," concluded Ms Lillicrap.

Sales in the three months February 2021 increased across all jurisdictions compared to the same time the previous year. South Australia is up by 149.7%, followed by Victoria (+69.1%) and Queensland (+60.4%). New South Wales increased by 46.2% and Western Australia is up by 25.1% over the same period.



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## 'Sneaky' sperm particles hitchhike around the body

A world-first discovery of 'sneaky' sperm particles found outside their 'home' in the testes offers new hope for men with fertility issues and new insight for cancer researchers.

The surprising discovery found that sperm-derived proteins are able to enter the circulation, providing rationale for a simple blood test for men with fertility issues, in place of invasive biopsy surgery.

The study, published in the Journal of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB J), is the first ever in-depth analysis of testicular fluid. It revealed that sperm-derived proteins are deliberately released from the tubules where sperm are produced in the testes, into the surrounding fluid. From this fluid, these proteins can then enter the bloodstream.

Co-lead from the University of Newcastle and Hudson Institute of Medical Research, Dr Liza O'Donnell, said the discovery debunked the widely accepted belief that sperm-specific proteins are strictly confined to the testes' tubules behind the blood-testis barrier or 'fence'.

"We discovered that many proteins that are found only in sperm are released by the sperm-producing tubules into the fluid inside the testis. From this fluid, these proteins can encounter immune cells and enter circulation in the body," Dr O'Donnell said.

"This was really surprising to all of us because scientific and medical textbooks tell us these proteins are absolutely not supposed to be there."

Professor Lee Smith, University of Newcastle co-lead, said he was proud of his team for challenging the status quo.

"This discovery really does defy what we thought we knew about testicular function. The knowledge represents a major step forward to advance fertility diagnosis and treatment in men, and could offer important clues for other treatments," said Professor Smith.

Approximately 9% of infertile men do not produce enough sperm in the testis for fertile ejaculation and for most, surgical retrieval of sperm from the testes for IVF is the only prospect to achieve parenthood.

Dr O'Donnell said the lack of markers to predict successful retrieval of sperm was a major issue in the management of these patients.

"The surgery is unsuccessful in up to half of all patients for various reasons, but now that we know many sperm-specific proteins are able to be released from the testes, there's potential to predict success by a less-invasive blood test.

"We found that the levels of some of the sperm-specific proteins in the testes fluid reflected the level of sperm production within the tubules, suggesting these proteins could be an indicator of fertility status in men," Dr O'Donnell said.

The sperm particles discovery may also offer cancer researchers new insight into therapies.

"Many of the sperm-specific proteins we found in the testes fluid are also known as cancer- testis antigens or CTAs, which are often produced by cancers," Dr O'Donnell said.

"It's a widely held assumption that these CTAs are exclusive to the tubules of the testes so they were thought to be absent from the circulation in normal, cancer-free men (and women). This makes them an attractive target for cancer immunotherapy, where the goal is to generate an immune response against the CTA to kill the cancer cells.

"However, our findings suggest that because some of these CTAs can actually enter circulation, they would have already been recognised by the immune system as "normal" and therefore an immunotherapy approach targeting CTAs would not work in men.

"There are currently many ongoing clinical trials across the world targeting CTAs for cancer immunotherapy treatment so this discovery is vital to help researchers exclude certain approaches and redirect their research efforts," Dr O'Donnell said.

## New short course teaches how to innovate like a startup founder

TAFE NSW and Sydney School of Entrepreneurship have launched their first collaboration to deliver an online short course available to people across the state.

'Innovate Like A Startup Founder' begins March 23 and is the first online short course from the TAFE NSW and SSE partnership that is available to anyone who wants to step out of their comfort zone and into the innovation space.

Sydney School of Entrepreneurship (SSE) is an unprecedented collaboration between all 11 NSW universities and TAFE NSW. SSE offers short courses and work-integrated learning experiences focusing on innovation, design thinking and entrepreneurship skills.

SSE CEO Dr Sarah Jones said the one-week course is designed for those who want to develop an innovative idea and turn it into a real-world project or business.

"Entrepreneurial education builds capability, enhances employability and contributes to the innovative advancement of communities," Dr Jones said.

"SSE and TAFE NSW are natural partners to offer this new short course to anyone interested in taking the next steps to further their career or developing their interest in innovation and entrepreneurship."

SSE alumnus Stephen Cooper worked as a photographer for 30 years before discovering an appetite for entrepreneurship. After starting his own photography company, Stephen decided to enrol in a Certificate IV in New Small Business at TAFE NSW.

Stephen discovered SSE and jumped at the chance to enrol in two additional online short courses in innovation, Ideation and Structuring for Success.

During the courses, Stephen continued to combine his passions and developed the beginnings of an interactive app that gives users hands-on experience of photography in a real-world environment.

"I made an app in Ideation which is something I hadn't done before that took the knowledge that I had, my photographic knowledge and added different learning outcomes to create something unique," Stephen said.

It was through these short courses that Stephen learnt how to harness different entrepreneurial tools and skillsets to enhance his own business. Stephen is encouraging others to step out of their comfort zones and into the innovation space.

"It's not something to be scared of – it's a great opportunity to look at the world in a different way. Being a short course, you're able to achieve something in a short period of time, go outside your comfort zone and come up with something new."

Students who complete the Innovate Like A Startup Founder course will receive a TAFE Statement of Attainment in Innovation Fundamentals.





## Lived legal experience – A key to successful innovation

**Andrew Windybank**  
**Richard Suters**  
**SWS Lawyers**

There are plenty of pitfalls for an entrepreneur starting-up a new business venture. One area a founder tends to leave towards the bottom of the 'to do list' is seeking advice from a lawyer with genuine lived start-up experience. Ultimately, significant time and money can be saved by engaging an advisor who takes time to understand the idea and apply the law to the circumstances in a practical and efficient way. Simple right?

Empirical studies and associated literature confirm that the best way to incubate an idea is to collaborate and share (e.g. Marullo, C, Casprini, E, Di Minin, A, Piccaluga, A. 'Ready for Take-off': How Open Innovation influences startup success. Creativity and Innovation Management. 2018; 27). However, a lawyer is likely to tell an entrepreneur that the sharing needs to be done in an informed and staged way, with suitable contractual protection. Many entrepreneurs think these two conflicting propositions are impossible to reconcile and the legal approach stifles innovation. That may be in part because the legal advice seems impossible to apply in practice. One way to navigate this and many other contradictions is to partner with a lawyer who has an appropriate level of practical experience in all aspects of the evolution of a start-up venture.

3ME Technology Pty Limited (3ME Tech) is a Hunter based business that supplies clean-tech for tough industries, including mining, military and marine. 3ME Tech offers state-of-the-art battery systems to improve electric vehicle (EV) performance, safety and sustainability.

In 2017, 3ME Tech's founding team approached SWS Lawyers to provide advice on what would become six key areas of legal focus. Since the beginning SWS has worked with 3ME Tech across all six areas.

Justin Bain, CEO, says: "Our founding executive team partnered with SWS because it has the track record for providing practical legal advice to start-up ventures from inception to exit. Over time we have found our relationship with the firm has evolved as quickly as our commercial requirements have and it has been efficient and effective to be supported by a legal team that has developed a holistic understanding of the business."

Founders need advisors who can predict and manage issues before they arise, freeing the entrepreneur to focus on ideas and business development. 3ME Tech says the advice SWS provides goes beyond answering the legal question. Most issues require collaboration and common understanding and purpose to achieve the best result. The key areas of involvement with SWS include:

- **IP protection** – 3ME Tech sought IP commercialisation and registration advice early and before publication of any aspect of the central ideas that underpin the business. The founders and investors did their best not to divulge (publish) key information, including through innovation forums, promotion or marketing or networked start-up and capital raising events. 3ME Tech also put contracts in place before discussing its business plans and ideas with third parties.
- **NDA** – Any discussion about any idea needs to be backed by an enforceable confidentiality agreement or "NDA" – and not one downloaded from the web or "borrowed" from a corporate. The tailored document needs to cover what the entrepreneur considers to be "confidential information". It must confirm the ownership of ideas (the intellectual property) to be disclosed, and set a term and purpose for the use of the information that is shared. 3ME Tech has template documents which can be rolled out to various parties, but it is important to note SWS created it for the specific circumstances of its business.



**Batt Mobile Equipment (BME) TRITEV powered by 3ME Technology, on site at Aeris Resources Tritton Copper mine**

- **Employee Contracts** – All entrepreneurs need help. People who join the venture, whether as employees or contractors, must enter a contract. Promises made to these 'early stage participants' need to be documented and the venture must secure all created intellectual property on and from its creation. Failure to properly document a contractual relationship with employees and contractors (or consultants) to clearly secure ownership of intellectual property can cause significant headaches in a future fundraising or strategic transaction. These and other issues should be dealt with before development of the idea, capital raising and expansion of the venture proceeds.
- **Business Structure Advice** – Early in the venture, the entrepreneur will need structuring advice. 3ME Tech went to SWS for this advice and before they went to an accountant. The founders recognised that they needed advice on how to establish and structure a company for the venture. But they also recognised that decision would require an understanding of future activities such as capital raising and exit. An appropriate business structure, and associated accounting and tax treatments, 'fell out' of the dialogue concerning how the founders wanted to develop, manage and future-proof the business.
- **Shareholder Documents** – A lot can be said about shareholder arrangements. For 3ME, perhaps the most significant aspect was the need to look ahead. There are future events – such as unexpected share sales, calls for urgent loan funds, rounds of capital raising and (ultimately) exit – that must be addressed in a document. These aspects need to be thought through right when the entrepreneur is focused on the core idea and expansion. Looking into the future requires guidance and experience. Getting this done at an early stage of the process has been very significant for 3ME Tech and assisted the founders in unexpected ways.
- **Governance** – All ventures need governance, which is a system "by which an organisation is controlled and operates, and the mechanisms by which it, and its people, are held to account" (Governance Institute of Australia). In 3ME Tech's case the shareholder documents and constitution of the company have been important. In time an advisory



board (in addition to its formal Board of Directors) may be used to add insight and direction. Ultimately, however, regular advice and a clearly defined governance system that clarifies the relationships between a company's management, its board, its shareholders and other takeholders (including its collaboration partners) has been critical in the success of the venture.

The 3ME Tech business is now at a point where the company has several business-to-business contracts, has been through seed capital raising (coupled with inevitable shareholder changes), is rapidly adding engineering and technology specialists to its team and is preparing for a Series A offer to expand on its competitive position.

Justin and his Board recognise the value added by early and tailored legal advice, as well as the benefit in dealing with people who have done it before and bring genuine expertise to the table:

"The SWS team includes people with specific skills. They have the skills needed to get the little things right. The money saved by taking early advice and really thinking about some of the key things has been significant for our company".

*SWS Lawyers offers expert and specialised legal services in corporate, commercial, employment and intellectual property law. The firm has a long track record working with Hunter based entrepreneurs. Further information can be found at [www.swslawyers.com.au](http://www.swslawyers.com.au).*

*3ME Technology Pty Ltd is a tech company, providing battery systems, software & power electronics, who works collaboratively with vehicle/platform manufacturers and end-users (static energy storage systems) to electrify their offerings. Further information can be found at [www.3me.technology](http://www.3me.technology).*



**Andrew Windybank** is a corporate lawyer and company director with more than 20 years' experience. He specialises in mergers and acquisitions, divestment and capital raising transactions for SMEs as well as advising clients on intellectual property commercialisation and new business ventures. Andrew regularly presents on directors' duties, legal aspects of business establishment and capital raising for 'start-up enterprises'.



**Richard Suters** is a commercial lawyer with more than 25 years' experience in both private practice and in-house roles. He is a contract and commercial law specialist and advises clients on a range of corporate and commercial legal matters, including commercialisation of intellectual property. Richard is known for his ability to provide clear, commercially focused legal advice.



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## Energy Renaissance to deliver defence-grade cybersecure battery management system with CSIRO and IMCRC

be manufactured in Tomago.

The A\$1.46 million BMS project is jointly funded and developed by Energy Renaissance with Australia's national science agency, CSIRO and the Innovative Manufacturing CRC (IMCRC). The BMS will monitor and report on the battery's usage, lifespan and faults through a mobile network to Energy Renaissance and their customers. Communicating through an inverter, the system will enable secure real time data, analytics and remote management to drive down the risk of battery failure and operating costs for grid-scale energy storage users.

Brian Craighead, Technology and Development Director of Energy Renaissance said, "The collaboration between Energy Renaissance, CSIRO, and IMCRC will promote an Australian Battery Management System instead of relying on an overseas technology platform. Working together with CSIRO will ensure we can create a world-class defence-grade cybersecure Battery Management System that is fully developed and managed in Australia for critical energy storage infrastructures."

"Software designed and developed in Australia has a strong global reputation and we've built a history and track record as an industry. Through this project, we will demonstrate the advantage that Australian intellectual property can bring to a highly competitive energy storage market where a superior Battery Management System is critical for the operating efficiency of a battery."

Dr Adam Best, Principal Research Scientist at CSIRO said, "CSIRO is delighted to be working with Energy Renaissance to develop a Battery Management System that is the 'nerve centre' of a battery, and will make batteries safer, more affordable and optimised to operate in high temperature environments. Our partnership with Energy Renaissance validates CSIRO's capabilities to collaborate, train and transfer skills for the advanced manufacturing of batteries."

David Chuter, CEO and Managing Director at IMCRC sees the research collaboration between Energy Renaissance and CSIRO as a catalyst for further establishing an Australian battery manufacturing sector.

"The growing interest in renewable energy and thus demand for lithium-ion batteries provides a great opportunity for Australia. Through accessing local knowledge and expertise, this project will demonstrate how we can utilise Industry 4.0 technologies and principles to establish a viable Australian battery manufacturing sector for the benefit of all Australians, and as a national manufacturing priority."

The commitment from all involved in this project will help position and strengthen the value and influence of Australia's role as a strategic partner in the global lithium-ion battery value chain."

Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews, who launched Australia's Resources Technology and Critical Minerals Processing manufacturing road map at Energy Renaissance's site in March, welcomed the research collaboration.

"This project is a great example of how local industry and research organisations can work together to turn an innovative idea into a high-value product that strengthens Australia's competitive advantage and secures greater investment and market share."

Energy Renaissance's 4,500 sqm purpose-built facility in Tomago, NSW will manufacture Australian made batteries that are safe, secure, affordable and optimised to perform in hot climates.

Energy Renaissance, an Australian lithium-ion battery manufacturer, announced on 25 March that it will develop a defence-grade cybersecure Battery Management System (BMS) for its superStorage family of batteries that are to

These batteries will power stationary (grid and microgrid, renewables, community storage, mining electrification, Defence SilentWatch applications) and transport (buses, light commercial and industrial vehicles) applications.



Adam Best, Principal Research Scientist (CSIRO), Senator Hollie Hughes (Senator for NSW), Brian Craighead, Director of Development and Technology (Energy Renaissance), Mark Chilcolte, Managing Director (Energy Renaissance), Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Karen Andrews, the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology and David Chuter, CEO and Managing Director (IMCRC)

## UoN projects awarded almost \$2 million in funding

The Australian Research Council (ARC) has announced its latest round of funding for Linkage Project grants, with three University of Newcastle projects attracting funding totalling \$1,868,005.

The projects reflect the University's strong commitment to sustainability, including working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote Indigenous knowledges in the management of country and culture.

\$1,356,005 was awarded for Dr Paul Hodge and the Yandaarra team to develop and model Indigenous-led land practices, with the aim of enhancing Australia's ability to respond to disruptive environmental change on the NSW mid-north coast.

Led by Aunty Shaa Smith and Gumbaynggirr Country, inter-species communication – with a particular focus on koalas, whales and plants – and innovative songline mapping is expected to generate new knowledge in Indigenous-led, Country-led environmental practice. The benefits are set to include the nurturing of biodiversity corridors and the development of environmental best practice.

Another \$352,000 was awarded to Associate Professor Jiabao Yi, whose team is creating a new method to remove and degrade of microplastics in contaminated water systems. Previous work from the University of Newcastle showed that humans are ingesting around 250 grams of plastic per year, with most entering our systems through water. This new project will use halloysite clay combined with magnetised nanoparticles to adsorb and decompose microplastics in water treatment, leading to cleaner waterways.

Professor Graham Goodwin was awarded \$160,000 for to improve the operation of bio-fuelled boilers in the sugar industry. Boilers used in the sugar industry burn the cane residual remaining after the sugar syrup is extracted to generate steam, some of which generates electricity, with excess power exported to the grid. However, poor fuel consistency and conditions often hinder production. Professor Goodwin is using novel approaches to modelling and control of the combustion process with the expected outcome being more reliable steam production and better electricity generation – leading to improved biofuel energy generation across the country – as well as improved sugar production and safer boiler operation.

## Revolutionary technology to aid Newcastle domestic violence victims

Friends With Dignity and CommSync have partnered to provide a first in safety for victims and survivors of domestic violence with the FriendSafe program.

Complementing the Friends With Dignity Urgent Request program, the FriendSafe initiative aims to provide an extra level of personal safety to help those who have fled a violent situation, as well as those who may still be at risk, by providing them with a Personal Safety device.

"These devices are available to individuals who feel they are at immediate risk of abuse or violence, and feel unsafe to undertake everyday activities," said Friends With Dignity Chief Executive Officer, Manuela Whitford.

Utilising the latest technology, monitored personal safety devices for individuals and families are now easier and more discreet than ever.

The FriendSafe program offers a device that has the ability to call emergency services with the push of a button.

"The device will alert anyone identified in the individual's Safety Plan, and if necessary, directly dial emergency services at any time of the day or night, 365 days a year," said Ms Whitford.

The FriendSafe program has several options available, one being the Sponsorship option which will cover the full cost of the device, including a 12-month monitoring subscription, for those



referred by registered agencies, services or organisations, to be used in conjunction with their safety management plan.

The personal safety device will also be available to purchase directly from Friends With Dignity, for those not associated with a referral service.

"The FriendSafe program is an initiative established to ensure everyone is able to practice a basic need of feeling safe and access to an immediate response when feeling threatened or at risk," said Friends With Dignity National FriendSafe Program Manager, Melissa Van Der Burgt.



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# Hunter Innovation Festival - Innovate to Regenerate 3 – 16 May 2021

After a COVID-enforced hiatus in 2020, the Hunter Innovation Festival is back for 2021, kicking off on Monday 3 May, until Sunday 16 May, with this year's festival theme being 'Innovate to Regenerate.'

The City of Newcastle is proud to partner with Hunter iF to make the Innovation Festival possible. Newcastle has a proud history when it comes to innovation, manufacturing and engineering, hosting over 180 innovation ecosystem assets including 25 innovation spaces, 24 programs and 15 innovation support organisations.

Made up of more than 40 events, this year's Festival aims to connect, inspire, educate and promote a culture of innovation throughout the Hunter. The events will range from interactive workshops, to information sessions on how to secure funding for new ventures, tech play for all ages, tours of local businesses achieving great things, business lunches, inspirational talks and more.

Claire Quigley, Festival Coordinator and Innovation Consultant, is excited to be working to deliver a festival focused on making innovation accessible through hybrid and virtual events, as well as relevant and connective live events across Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, all the way up to Scone. One of her goals for the 2021 Festival is to create connectivity across community, business and industry, government and education. This is thoroughly reflected in the diverse range of events in the Festival line-up.

According to Claire, "The Hunter is the leading regional economy in Australia, and in order to maintain that position, we need opportunities to connect people, ideas and capabilities to continue fostering innovation."

Lake Macquarie will be home to several interactive events during the festival, Claire Chaikin-Bryan, Smart Cities Lead for Lake Macquarie City Council, is excited that this year's events are "Focused on bringing people and ideas together in a free, dynamic, hands-on environment. We want to hear your ideas and gain an understanding of how you use innovation in your life. We're open to different ideas and we want to connect you with available supports to make them a reality"

Some highlights to Lake Macquarie's events will be the High School Protothon, giving some aspiring young innovators the opportunity to design a prototype, pitch it and gain valuable resources to help them with future endeavours. They're also proud to be launching their expanded 'Community Internet of Things Network' and will be running workshops throughout the festival to inspire people to get hands on and create their own uses for the network.

According to Lake Macquarie City Council, growth in the innovation eco-system provides the greatest economic opportunities for the region's future, holding the key to solving social and environmental challenges. "Innovation is vital to the creation of a circular economy, and a vibrant future for Lake Macquarie."

The Innovation Festival is actively supported by AusIndustry, who instigated the first Innovation Festival back in 2002. Natalie Gillam, AusIndustry Hunter Regional Manager, sees the Festival as a valuable way to bring innovation awareness to the entire Hunter, commenting that "Innovation is not just a city thing". She highlights that innovation isn't always high-tech, rather "Innovation is changing the way things get done - be it a totally new device or a new way of making the device, a new piece of software, new materials, new business models."

Another long-time champion of the Hunter Innovation Festival, The University of Newcastle says the Festival plays a big part in connecting emerging and experienced innovators and entrepreneurs through a number of events including 'Startup Stories'. Siobhan Curran, Senior Manager I2N believes that "The best kind of innovation brings people together for a common good - which is exactly what we'll need to overcome some of the most pressing challenges of our time."

This festival is also proudly supported by longstanding Hunter organisations the Port of Newcastle and The Garis Group.

With such a passionate, dedicated team of sponsors and volunteers, we are confident that the Innovation Festival will bring short and long-term gains to the entire Hunter Region.

**A full event calendar and more details are available at <https://hunterinnovationfestival.org/program-2021>**



## The Hunter: 'electric motor of the Australian economy'

**Sam Mella**  
*Beyond Zero Emission*

Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) is officially launching their Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct Project in the Hunter at the Innovation Festival on May 3. Renewable Energy Industrial Precincts support clusters of fully electrified manufacturers powered by 100% renewable energy priced to be globally competitive.

The Hunter's rich legacy as a global energy hub has laid strong foundations for a Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct: excellent air, rail and transmission infrastructure, a deep water port, a large skilled workforce. We have strong existing trade relationships with Asia, especially with the emerging green hydrogen economies - Japan and Korea. Now, as the energy market changes, it's our mission to ensure the Hunter remains a global energy powerhouse into the future.

Hunter companies are backing Renewable Energy Industrial Precincts. There's widespread recognition that our region has an opportunity to meet growing global demand for zero-emissions products as countries and companies commit to eliminating greenhouse gas emissions. A Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct will enable us to take emissions out of supply chains, from minerals processing through to manufacturing.

There is a quiet revolution happening in the Hunter. We are innovating. We have cleantech, adaptation, collaboration, battery manufacturing and retrofits, electric vehicles, hydrogen cells, niche wind solutions, and some of Australia's biggest industrial-

scale use of renewable energy. And a Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct will turn these seeds into a mature industry.

Beyond Zero Emissions is collecting expressions of interest from companies to demonstrate there is a strong demand for a Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct in the Hunter.

And some of the Hunter's most exciting and innovative manufacturing and technology companies — including Molycop, Ampcontrol, 3ME and BME — have already expressed support for a precinct powered by 100% renewable energy.

The Hunter is well placed to become Australia's first Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct. BZE has the Hunter, Central West and New England Renewable Energy Zones in development. The NSW Government's Industry Opportunity Report highlights opportunities in green hydrogen, green steel, green ammonia, green aluminum, transport and logistics and controlled environmental horticulture. The NSW government has also outlined stage one of its Net Zero Plan and is ready to support heavy emitters to adapt to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

The Hunter's expertise in mining and mining equipment and defence is an existing cluster that is already rapidly innovating and deploying new technologies around these industry opportunities.

At the Innovation Festival BZE will be showcasing some of our most exciting innovators and hosting a panel discussion about Renewable Energy Industrial Precincts. The Hunter is set to become the electric motor of the Australian economy!

Do you have a project that would benefit from locating in the Hunter Valley Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct? Come to our event at the Innovation Festival to learn more.

## Activating Renewable Energy Industrial Precincts in the Hunter

Join Beyond Zero Emissions at our Hunter Innovation Festival event to learn how renewable energy is repowering manufacturing in the Hunter.

**3 May 2021**

**Newcastle City Hall**  
290 King Street Newcastle

**4.00 pm**  
Meet the Innovators Showcase

**5.30 pm**  
Industry Leaders Panel





## Delivering ideas from design to manufacture and the market

In May, award winning product design firm Design Anthology will partner with The Business Centre to deliver a workshop on "Product to Market Fit" for the Hunter Innovation Festival.

Sometimes the word innovation is thrown around, but Design Anthology clearly define it as the creation, development and realisation of a new product that is optimised for efficiency, effectiveness and competitive advantage.

Established in 2009 by husband and wife team, Josh and Aimee Jeffress, the growing company has completed hundreds of projects across industry sectors like aeronautics, sporting equipment, exhibition, industrial equipment, mining, medical devices, consumer electronics and more.

Design Anthology deliver an idea from design to manufacture and then on to the market.

A great local example of their work is the Smart City Project for City of Newcastle. Design Anthology was commissioned by the City of Newcastle to create a modular 'IoT smart sensor platform' which could be fitted to the top of the Hess Smart Street Lights. The Design Anthology Team identified, developed, and delivered additional opportunities not covered in the original brief which vastly reduced the cost and complexity of installing the IoT smart sensor platform to the top of the light poles "the S2". Other opportunities were developed such as the integrated 'IoT sensor stack' "the S1" at street level which provides additional environmental data while also removing the complexity of

installation. Design Anthology's innovative Idea Visualisation platform delivered a clear vision of the proposed products, how they would be used, the key benefits, a clear manufacturing and development strategy as well as cost modelling that outlined capital expenditure and return on investment. This was warmly received by the key stakeholders at the City of Newcastle and we have subsequently gone on to deliver and install both Smart City Sensor products with a deployment robot currently under development.

The effective design of the Smart Pole units delivered a high quality, optimised, weatherproof, rugged, intuitive and usable product. The design also won Design Anthology and the City of Newcastle a Good Design Award Gold Accolade in 2020.

According to the Good Design Awards Jury:

"The design solution is elegantly resolved, and the modular and existing-fit nature is innovative. A clever approach to managing the diversity of sensors in a robust and clean design. This is a golden example of solid industrial design, clever tech and robust engineering."

It's one of so many examples.

"The products we design are always optimized for manufacture as well as modular, enabling our customers to create additional product ranges from the core elements which vastly reduces the cost of manufacturing tooling," Josh says of Design Anthology's effectiveness. "Our visual assets, cost modeling and clear actionable strategy allow our clients to realise, capitalise and execute their ideas for a fixed cost budget."

Experts in traditional and advanced prototyping and manufacturing techniques, Design Anthology design each product for manufacture, assembly, disassembly, transportation and use. They ensure their clients' expectations are always met if not exceeded.



designanthology.com

Designing and Manufacturing exceptional products



In terms of competitive advantage, all products are optimised for manufacture. Design Anthology uncover, define and improve the value proposition to ensure it aligns with the core technology and key benefits the product delivers to the end user.

"We are very good at bringing together different disciplines to resolve complex problems, deliver real world solutions. The results are cutting edge products," Josh says.

They know the steps involved in the product development process and help their clients navigate the pitfalls to ensure they deliver an exceedingly successful outcome.

And, to top it all off, they love what they do.

"At Design Anthology we are a curious, highly specialized, inquisitive bunch of passionate design junkies - who love creating, optimizing, making and delivering new and exciting products to our clients and their customers," says studio manager Elisha Smallcombe.

**To learn more about Design Anthology visit [www.designanthology.com](http://www.designanthology.com) or call (02) 4021 1027.**

**To register for the "Product to Market Fit" event visit the Hunter Innovation Festival's website <https://hunterinnovationfestival.org/>**

## Hunter Angels pitch event

Have you ever wondered what happens at a Hunter Angels pitch event? Here is your opportunity to find out. As part of the Hunter Innovation Festival, Hunter Angels will be holding a pitch event at 5 pm on Monday 10 May 2021, and any member of the public is welcome to attend. Three local companies will be pitching: Anditi, The Village Co and Your Food Collective. Each pitch will be critiqued by a panel of Hunter Angel members as well as a representative from Accelerating Commercialisation. The event is being hosted by I2N (University of Newcastle) with the support of AusIndustry and event sponsor Port of Newcastle.

The Port of Newcastle says "We pride ourselves on our innovative supply chain solutions and being more than a Port. Supporting events like this help to ensure we drive the innovation conversation at grass roots level, building Australia's prosperity."

Hunter Angels is a group of 30 members, having a wide diversity of backgrounds, qualifications and experiences, who invest in innovative enterprises in the Hunter and elsewhere. In the past 12 months over \$2.4 million has been invested by members of the group, helping to create opportunity and quality jobs in the Hunter. Membership of Hunter Angels is open to anyone who is an angel investor or who has a genuine interest in becoming one.

**For further information about this event see the Hunter Innovation Festival website.**





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## Top 5 Must Do's for property investors

**Pippa Rowntree**  
**Leah Jay**

At Leah Jay, we help property investors go further with a dedicated Investment Services team that provide independent advice throughout the investment process. If you're thinking about investing in property here are our 5 Must Do's you should first consider.

### 1. Research the market

Learn about the areas you are considering like local attractions and amenities, property values, vacancy rates and future developments. Also understand the demographics, economy, transport, infrastructure, and services available in any prospective area you are considering.

It is important to have a clear objective. For example, do you need a tax offset or are you looking to grow your super? I encourage clients to have a team of advisors around them to assist in making the best decisions for them. Also ensure that pre-approval for finance is ready to go before you make a purchase.

### 2. Understand the numbers

Determine whether you can afford the repayments over the longer term and factor in additional costs like pre-purchase inspections, conveyancer fees, insurance and vacancy periods.

Sound advice from a trustworthy independent mortgage advisor is a prudent early step in the process. An independent advisor can approach numerous lenders and help structure your loans depending on your situation and what your future plans are.

### 3. Engage a Property Manager

A professional Property Manager will provide advice on tenancy law, your responsibilities, expected rental income and handle the day-to-day management.

A Property Manager will use their knowledge and expertise to look after your property, working to maximise your return and provide peace of mind by ensuring your asset is being protected.

Self-managing your investment can seem like a way to save costs, however, should problems arise throughout a tenancy can prove costly in the long run.

### 4. Think long term

Have long-term goals and an investment plan in place to achieve them, especially if you aspire to own a multiple property portfolio.

It's important to consider factors like career changes, growth within your family and changes in your financial situation. I advise you to ask yourself:

- Q.** What do I want to achieve with my property investment and when? Immediate cash flow, long-term capital growth, ongoing income in retirement etc?
- Q.** What kinds of properties/how many properties might I need to purchase to achieve this?
- Q.** How do my current finances fit with this plan?

### 5. Know the risks

As an investor, it is important to buy with your head and not your heart. You should be looking for a property that is well presented, functional, with potential for good rental return and future capital growth.

As with all types of investment there are risks but with the right strategy and support, you can mitigate these risks to give yourself the best chance of success.

I advise my clients to think about the type of property and tenants they are trying to attract. For example, granny flat additions without good separation/privacy and an understanding of responsibility regarding communal areas could see higher vacancy. This will result in higher turnover of tenants, which in turn affects the rental yield.

We understand investing is not always easy. Our dedicated Investment Services team provides guidance, support, and advice to thousands of our clients when they are looking to purchase, develop and divest.

**For further information contact Pippa on 0499 014 954, email [pippa@leahjay.com.au](mailto:pippa@leahjay.com.au) or visit [www.leahjay.com.au](http://www.leahjay.com.au)**

*Disclaimer: This information is general in nature and does not take into account your personal situation. You should consider whether the information is appropriate to your situation, and for professional advice, seek out a financial adviser.*



**Pippa Rowntree** is the Investment Services Manager at Leah Jay. Pippa has a varied background in many different industries. As one of the first women at sea with the Royal Navy, she dedicates herself to achieving the best outcome in all circumstances.

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## Restarting 'business as usual'

**Lloyd Kerr**  
**Jirsch Sutherland**

For many business owners, their business is among their biggest investments – and after the challenges presented by the pandemic, for many it's been a rollercoaster ride. But now the government is signalling it's time to get back to 'business as usual', which is why it's a good time to be doing a health check of your business – or one you're planning to invest in.

The end of the government support measures and the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines have signalled it's time to get back to 'business as usual'.

Another green light for getting back to business as usual – or the new usual – are the signs that ATO is 'waking up'. They have commenced 'soft' collecting of debts and contacting SMEs to sound them out about their financial situation and, more to the point, their ability to pay. With an estimated \$53 billion debt, the ATO certainly has its work cut out.

However, for many SMEs, business as usual will be more considered and perhaps cautious. For some there will be a focus on recovery and recalibrating, while for others, a time to grow and diversify. Many will understandably look at ways to become more resilient, more pandemic proof. As a business is the biggest or one of the most substantial investments for its owner or SMSF investor, it's crucial to keep it thriving.

With JobKeeper now wrapped up and tax payments and payroll commitments resuming, it will no doubt be a challenging time ahead for many SMEs. So where to restart 'business as usual'?

Firstly, conduct a thorough assessment of your business – or the one you're planning to invest in – particularly your financial

situation and tax obligations. Having this information at the ready is essential for moving forwards and will also put you in a stronger position to negotiate during any tax collection discussions with the ATO. An assessment should include:

Secondly, be proactive. Business owners can now shift from being reactive to the impacts of COVID-19 to survive, to taking charge again to adapt, consolidate and leverage new opportunities.

- Assessing cash flow and preparing a cash flow forecast to understand current cash burn
- Assessing payroll commitments
- Calculating all costs: operational, rent, equipment hire, product purchases (raw materials, ingredients), advertising and marketing costs
- Reviewing employee roles
- Calculating creditor and bank debts and tax debt for next quarter
- Ensuring you can meet your Superannuation Guarantee obligations

If you find your company's health isn't in good shape, your financial adviser, accountant or business recovery specialist can help by:

- Conducting a cash flow remodelling
- Recommending cost reduction strategies to reduce cash flow pressure
- Suggesting ways to limit capital expenditure to preserve working capital reserves
- Recommending alternative funding options if required
- Investigating the closure of loss-making elements to reduce costs/preserve funds
- Exploring and recommending alternate markets or supply chains
- Strategic planning: Creating a recovery or a return to 'normal' plan

Conversely, if your business is in good shape and you're looking to grow, you could consider Step 3, which is acquiring another business or diversifying into other sectors. Whether you're an SME owner or an SMSF investor, conducting thorough due diligence is vital before purchasing any business.

As the past year certainly impacted many SMEs, request information on the company's performance pre-COVID-19, to give you a clearer idea of how it can perform in 'normal' times. As part of your due diligence, red flags – or signs of insolvency – to look out for include:

- Reduced cash flow and turnover
- Special payment arrangements with creditors
- Suppliers instigating COD or refusing to supply
- Overdue tax bills
- Attempts to borrow funds or raise additional equity capital
- Receipt of solicitors' letters, summonses, judgements or warrants
- Delaying/stopping financial and trading performance reporting and forecasting
- Letting go of staff and having staff morale issues
- Directors/owners having disputes with other directors and senior staff
- Making substantial bad debt write-offs
- Suffering stress and anxiety, displaying behaviour that is out of character
- Poorly presented / rundown business premises

All the best for restarting your business as usual - or making a new investment - perhaps with a little caution, flexibility, and entrepreneurialism.

**For further information or an obligation free consultation contact Lloyd on (02) 4965 6500 or email [enquiries@jirschsutherland.com.au](mailto:enquiries@jirschsutherland.com.au).**



**Lloyd Kerr** is a Partner at national business recovery and insolvency firm Jirsch Sutherland. Since opening the Newcastle office in 1993, Lloyd has helped many Hunter region businesses turnaround, grow and recalibrate.



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## SMSF corporate trustees

**Deidre Molloy**

**TSP Accountants & Business Advisers**

When establishing a SMSF a trustee is required. This can be either a company or individuals. Many older SMSF's were established with individual trustees however more recently, corporate trustees have become more popular.

### What are the benefits of a corporate trustee?

- **Continuous succession** – a company has an indefinite life span therefore a corporate trustee can ensure control of a SMSF. In the event of a death or mental or physical incapacity of a member, that person can be replaced swiftly as director of the corporate trustee, keeping costs to a minimum.
- **Administration efficiency** – less paperwork when dealing with appointment or cessation of members/directors, as the corporate trustee does not change. All assets of the Fund remain in the name of the corporate trustee.
- **Sole member** – you can have a SMSF where one individual is both the sole member and sole director. If the sole member becomes mentally incapacitated, their spouse can act as director under an enduring Power of Attorney to run the fund on their own without the need for interference by others.
- **Meets lender requirements** – when borrowing to buy property via your SMSF, most lenders require the SMSF to have a corporate trustee. Lenders usually accept higher LVRs with a corporate trustee.

- **Lower administrative penalties** – in the event that a fine or penalty is made in relation to the SMSF lower fines apply to a corporate trustee.

It should also be noted that both ASIC and the ATO prefer that SMSF's have sole purpose corporate trustees, as it reduces the chance of personal assets becoming intermingled with assets of the Fund.

Although the cost of setting up a corporate trustee and annual costs are more than appointing individual trustees, experience has shown that these upfront and annual costs are far less than the costs associated with change of individual trustees. With this in mind, SMSFs with individual trustees may wish to consider changing to a corporate trustee.

**For further information contact TSP Accountants & Business Advisers on (02) 4926 4155, email [admin@tspaccountants.com.au](mailto:admin@tspaccountants.com.au) or visit [www.tspaccountants.com.au](http://www.tspaccountants.com.au)**



**Deidre Molloy** is a Director at TSP Accountants & Business Advisers. She has over 25 years' experience of providing taxation and business advisory services to clients across a range of industries. She has a keen interest in superannuation with a focus on self-managed superannuation funds.

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## Investment risk - what's your appetite?

**Andrew Russell**  
**PKF Wealth**

It is often thought that one of the main roles of financial advisers is that they are stock picking gurus, that will help clients select a few shares, with great foresight, and these shares go to return handsome gains to clients. The reality is very different. Single stock selection makes up little, if any of an adviser's role in helping a client construct their portfolio. The focus of a financial adviser is in the more mundane, but critical role, of determining a clients most appropriate asset allocation.

### So, how does stock picking differ to asset allocation?

Security selection involves just that, picking individual stocks or equities as part of a portfolio based on a range of criteria, such as future earnings prospects or assessed valuation against its current market price, with a view to gain from future price increases. This approach can work and can provide significant returns, however, to borrow an economic phrase "there's no such thing as a free lunch". These portfolios may burn bright, but they will not burn long.

Significant opportunities for large returns are often accompanied by significant levels of risk that are far greater than those of a well-diversified portfolio. A well-diversified portfolio is what is achieved when assets are allocated effectively across many different assets including equities, of both large and small companies as well as Australian and global companies. Most portfolios will also include an allocation to defensive sectors, such as cash and fixed interest securities (government and corporate bonds).

Diversification is the key to managing investment risk and aims to reduce the risk of one or more investments in a portfolio of having a period of poor performance, as other investments in the portfolio will likely be doing well to make up for the ones that may be having a weak period. Poor returns can be driven by macro factors, such as a recession or market shock or may be company specific, which can include scandals, legislative changes,

CEO resignation or any number of unforeseen non-market events. All of which could impact returns in an adverse way in a portfolio made up of only a few single stocks.

Numerous academic studies have consistently shown asset allocation to be responsible for approximately 90% of returns for a portfolio, rather than investment selection. Clearly, for a portfolio to be sustainable and generate consistent returns to investors over mid to long-term time horizons, asset allocation is the critical decision.

### How are assets allocated?

Effective asset allocation depends on the individual risk profile of an investor. This risk profile is determined by many factors including financial goals, time horizons and personal tolerance for investment risk. Once this is known, an investor can be provided with a portfolio specific to their needs and goals. Whether that includes the needs for a consistent income or desire for long-term capital gains, proper asset allocation across the available asset classes, in appropriate proportions, will result in a well-diversified portfolio that should deliver this for a client.

With online platforms that now reduce brokerage more than ever, it is important for retail investors to consider their motivations. If you intend to speculate on volatile securities such as crypto currencies and tech stocks and expect to get rich quick, take the success stories you see in your newsfeed with a grain of salt. If you intend on achieving your long-term goals of wealth creation to provide you with a better future, it is worth talking to an experienced financial adviser to tailor you an investment to help make these goals a reality.

**For more information contact Andrew on (02) 4962 2688 or email [arussell@pkf.com.au](mailto:arussell@pkf.com.au)**



**Andrew Russell** is a highly credentialed Financial Adviser. His business and relationship expertise have seen him provide high level adviser and technical support to a significant number of clients. This has enabled him to gain experience working with a broad spectrum of clients to help them achieve their personal and wealth goals.

## Property cycle drives the economy - That's the secret

**Sean James**  
**Numus Business Services**

If you can read and understand the property cycle your business will potentially make great profits and you will make a lot of money.

It is that simple and straightforward, so why make it complicated.

The economy has been smashed, unemployment is up, government debt has gone through the roof, yet property is booming. This shows that the economy does not drive property, but that property drives the economy.

You already know that we have a boom and bust cycle with property. The last bust was around 2007/2008. It was called the global financial crisis (GFC). At that time when property went bust it brought down the economy, the world economy.

The US, UK and Aussie economies are all driven by the property cycle. That is just the way it is.

If you knew the years property would boom and then knew the years property would go bust, you could arrange your investments at the right time.

You would know when to buy and when to sell. You could potentially make a lot of money.

I specialise in medium-sized businesses and I know that those businesses, because they are agile and the owners can make decisions in a timely manner, can benefit if the owners understand the property cycle.

So, here's a serious question for you. Where are we now in the property cycle?

I use the property cycle to guide my own decisions. If you are a medium-sized business owner and you would like my help to show you where we are in the property cycle, please contact me.

It will benefit your business and you. There are many other issues about the cycle, but I don't have enough room in this article. If you want to do some research, I recommend you read 'Boom Bust' by Fred Harrison and 'The Secret Life of Real Estate and Banking' by Phillip Anderson.

**For further information contact Sean on 0411 600 799**



**Sean James** is a chartered accountant, chartered tax adviser, business strategist and adviser.

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*Sean is a chartered accountant, chartered tax adviser, business strategist and adviser.*

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Kerry Packer, a billionaire, had such a relationship with his accountant. It was personal. He met with his accountant on a regular basis to analyse and review his business and, together they developed business and financial strategies. NAB conducted research that found that business owners who had a close personal accountant had more success (NAB Insights 2018).

## ANALYSIS

At the end of each quarter I will prepare an analysis of your business and financial performance. By knowing your strengths and weaknesses you can make better decisions to make your business even better. You and I can develop business and financial strategies.

## TIME

I spend time with you. I am accessible. We plan together. I give you the same tips and advise that I give myself. This year I am taking on only 3 businesses, so I have the time to spend with you.

## TAX PLANNING

At the end of each quarter I will prepare tax planning strategies for your business and for you. I will show you how the tax system works so you can make better decisions about cash flow, purchase of equipment, wage packaging, superannuation and investments.

## PROPERTY CYCLE

I will help you to understand the property cycle and how it drives the economy. If you know where we are in the cycle, and how long it will last, your business can potentially make more profits and you can potentially create wealth for yourself. If you know the boom years and the bust years, you will know when to buy and sell. This will give you a great advantage.

## I WILL COME TO YOU

The best way to get to know you is for me to visit your business premises. That way I know what's going on and how you operate your business.

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A Canadian angler had a few too many to drink and decided to go ice fishing. He grabbed his gear, stepped out onto the ice, and started to cut a hole when he heard a booming voice shout: "THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE!"

The man jumped up and looked around, but he didn't see anyone. He carried on cutting into the ice, and again, the voice boomed:

"THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE!"

Still nobody. Was he going mad? The man stumbled to a new spot and started drilling another hole when the voice shouted for a third time:

"THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE!"

The man looked up into a blinding light and said "Is that you, God?"

The voice answered, "NO YOU IDIOT. IT'S THE MANAGER OF THE ICE RINK!"

I can't believe my parents support my choice of profession! I told them that I wanted to become a stand-up comedian.

They laughed at me.

A man sitting at a bar after work shares with the bartender why he is looking so stressed, "I'm not sleeping well. I have nightmares about a monster under my bed and I am too embarrassed to seek help."

A patron nearby overhears this and introduces himself, "I overheard your story and I am a psychiatrist. Maybe I can help. The first thing is you recognise these are only dreams, and that is obvious so I should be able to help you in a few sessions. Here's my card, give me a call."

A few weeks pass and the same two are once again at the bar after work. The psychiatrist says to the other guy, "Hi, how goes the nightmares? I never heard from you so I hope you are doing okay."

The other guy says, "Things are great, the bartender helped me."

The psychiatrist says, "The bartender helped you? You needed a trained professional to help you, what possibly could a bartender do that a psychiatrist couldn't?"

The other guy says, "He told me to saw the legs off my bed."

Two fish are in a tank. One turns to the other and says "Okay, you man the guns. I'll drive."

As a child I was raised on a points-based reward system, the better I was the more points I got and points mean prizes! Just a shame the police don't have the same ethos.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"A pile of rocks ceases to be a rock pile when somebody contemplates it with the idea of a cathedral in mind."

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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