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 The advertisement for Woodbury Civil is set against a background of construction scenes. A large yellow excavator is shown in the upper left, and a surveyor with a tripod-mounted instrument is in the upper right. A newly paved road curves through a green landscape at the bottom. A red hexagonal graphic in the center contains the company's services.

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From the Editor



As we approach the potential economic speedbumps of the ending of JobKeeper and the JobSeeker Supplement, it is heartening to see that the Australian economy is performing better than expected, even though some sectors are still struggling from the effects of COVID restrictions. The gross domestic product improved an impressive 3.1% over the December quarter, significantly above the

forecast 2.5%.

This followed a 3.4% rise in the September quarter and is the first time in 60 years that the nation has experienced gross domestic product increases of more than 3% in consecutive quarters.

These figures fill us with confidence that the business sector will be able to pick up much of the slack created by the removal of Government stimulus.

At the end of the December quarter, the economy was estimated to be 1.1% below that at the end of 2019 but

substantially above the 6% fall estimated by the RBA in their economic outlook in August.

There is still substantial recovery to be done, particularly in the worst affected sectors, but the economic outlook certainly looks significantly better than was feared around 6 months ago.

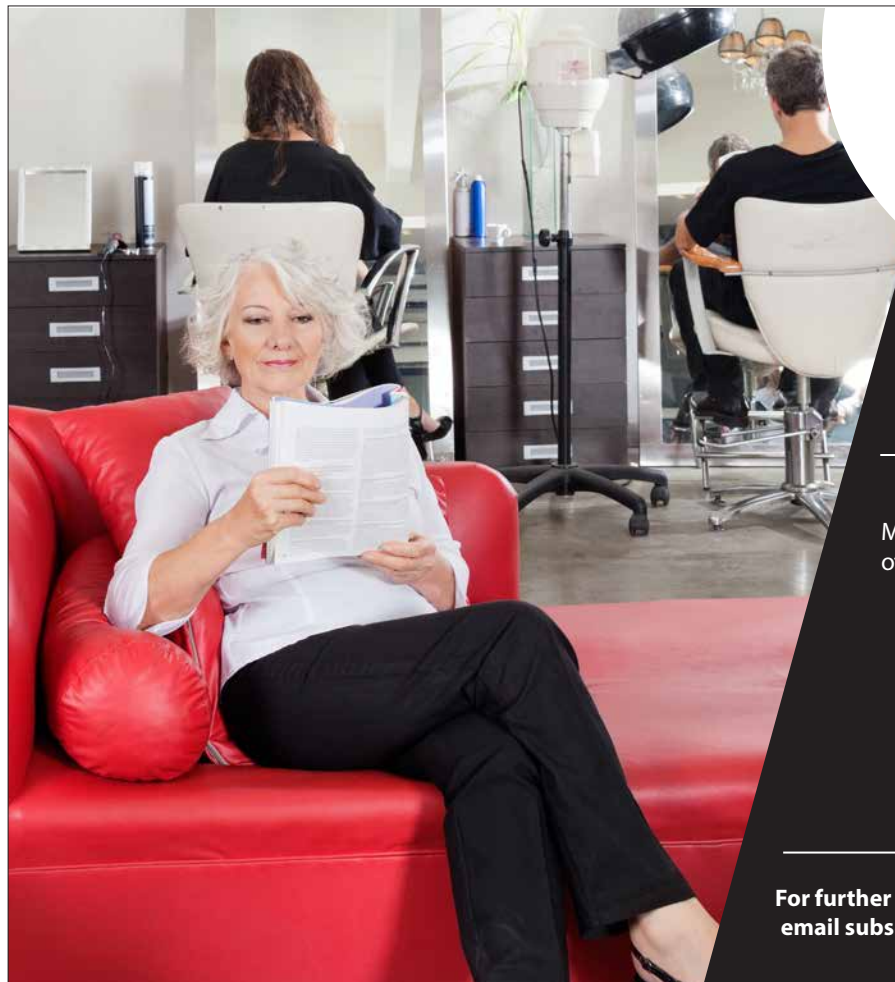
In a positive step for the Hunter, the NSW Government has belatedly announced Taylor Martin MLC as the new Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter.

The position has been left vacant since the former Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter, Scot MacDonald, lost preselection and subsequently his seat at the March 2019 election.

Taylor Martin is young in politician terms at 30 years old. He grew up on the Central Coast and studied Finance, Commerce and Economics at University of Newcastle. He was first elected to the NSW Upper House in 2017 and re-elected in 2019.

It has been quite a wait for the Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter to be filled and we wish Taylor the best in his new position. We hope he provides an effective means of advocating the needs of the Hunter.

Garry Hardie
Publisher & Editor



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UAE gifts seven bulk water fire tankers to Australia



The Government of the United Arab Emirates has generously gifted seven Category 13 Bulk Water Carriers to Australia after witnessing the unprecedented fire devastation in 2019/2020.

The seven fire tankers are valued at over \$3.4 million and will be disbursed across NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), ACT Emergency Services Agency (ACT ESA), Western Australia Department of Fire and Emergency Services (WA DFES), and Country Fire Authority Victoria (VIC CFA).

The official handover of the vehicles from the UAE Ambassador, H.E. Abdulla Al Subousi to the NSW Minister for Police and Emergency Services, David Elliott was held at the Varley Tomago

facilities where the vehicles have been manufactured.

The United Arab Emirates have a strong and long history of friendship with Australia and felt the need to do their part to support the Australian fire-fighting efforts. After discussions with Emergency Management Australia the United Arab Emirates decided the appropriate support was to gift the new fire trucks to various Emergency Agencies across some of the harshest fire affected areas of Australia.

Varley Vehicles, part of the Varley Group had the privilege in being selected to build the fire tankers. Varley are Australia's largest privately owned fire and emergency vehicle manufacturer.

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NEW OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGIC NETWORKING CUTTING EDGE INNOVATION SKILLED WORKFORCE TARGETED STRATEGIES

Air Extreme celebrates 15 years

Air Extreme is celebrating a major milestone for the family-run business, clocking up 15 years servicing the residential and commercial air conditioning needs of the Hunter.

Brothers Justin and Mick Bull launched the business in 2006, undertaking small commercial and residential installations, servicing, cleaning, and repairs.

Not long after the business was established, the brothers hired Lee McPhail to work as their commercial project manager. He's been a part of the team ever since and the brothers say their business wouldn't have grown to where it is today without Lee's assistance and skill.

With a reputation for delivering excellent customer service from their highly skilled technicians, today the brothers lead a team of 45.

Justin said he was proud of the organisation and team he and Mick have built.

"Our people-centred approach to business, commitment to modern technology and processes, and our fun and friendly team culture is what sets us apart from other businesses operating in the same trade," Justin said. "The team are united in their desire to ensure complete customer satisfaction, and we're pleased to be seen as a leader in the industry."

"We're often the choice of the trade, and there's no better compliment than when your own industry turns to you for your experience, expertise and advice."

The team have worked on several significant commercial projects, including City of Newcastle's new administration centre and council chambers, the David Maddison building, CA Brown Village at Toronto, West End Apartments, Herald Apartments, East End Stage One, and the Eaton and Kingsley Apartments.

Over the past 15 years, the brothers have seen the industry evolve and said the biggest change is the way people communicate.

"We're all about building strong relationships with everyone we work with, whether it's residential customers or project managers on our commercial sites," Mick Bull said.

"The way people communicate with their clients and teams has definitely changed. We really value interpersonal relationships and always find the time to get to know the customer or the commercial site team on a personal level, no matter the job.

"I think that's something we can credit our growth to – our strong relationships with customers and builders."



Air Extreme Air Conditioner founders, Mick Bull, Justin Bull, and Lee McPhail celebrate 15 years in business in 2021

Hunter projects on Infrastructure Australia Priority list

The expansion of Newcastle Airport and associated Williamstown Special Activation Precinct as well as the renewal of the Broadmeadow precinct have been added to the Infrastructure Australia Priority list.

They join the John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct and upgrades to the Newcastle to Sydney rail line as local projects highlighted of particular importance.

The Infrastructure Priority List is a comprehensive investment roadmap for Australia, outlining our national infrastructure needs for consideration by Australia's governments.

This year's Priority List features a record 44 new infrastructure proposals and provides a \$59 billion pipeline of nationally-significant investment opportunities.

Newcastle Airport CEO Dr Peter Cock said its inclusion was the strongest possible affirmation that upgrading the airport to Code E status was a game changer for the region, the aviation industry, and more broadly for the nation.

"The inclusion on IA's priority list, further demonstrates that this project is one of national significance with huge potential," he said.

"It strongly reinforces the link between upgrading the airport to international status and the global defence and aerospace precinct it sits in.

"Importantly, it also supports the foresight shown by the Federal Government in continuing conversations with us about the airfield upgrade over recent months.

"We are of the view that an international airport at Williamstown is vital to us fulfilling our commitment to be the airport the region deserves. Confidence boosting projects are even more important in the wake of the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism and aviation.

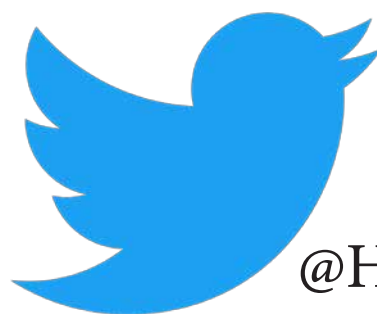
"We are very hopeful that this priority listing will boost the confidence to the Federal Government to commit to investing in the project in the short term."

The Hunter Sports & Entertainment Precinct at Broadmeadow also promises to be a major boost for the region. The land is State-owned, with McDonald Jones Stadium and Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground under the management of Venues NSW.

The Precinct also contains a variety of other sporting facilities including hockey fields, touch football fields, tennis courts, indoor basketball courts and a harness racing track. It is also home to organisations such as the PCYC and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service, as well as a variety of commercial uses.

Proposed new facilities include a multi-purpose entertainment and convention centre, a consolidated sports facility, an event plaza, a 3.5 star hotel for tourists and business travellers, landscaped walkways and better connections within and to the Precinct, and a multi-storey car park.

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Best and brightest attracted to Newcastle

City of Newcastle is incentivising talented and community-minded Australians to relocate to the city with a \$10,000 grant available for up to 30 innovative and accomplished entrepreneurs.

'New Move' was launched on 1 March as an economic development initiative to attract people from Australia's capital cities to relocate and invest in Newcastle, with independent economic modelling estimating the program could create up to 75 new jobs and \$25 million in local economic output.

City of Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said New Move is an Australian first, adapted from the highly successful US Tulsa Remote initiative, that will help attract new skills and talent to Newcastle through the initial incentive of a financial grant, whilst also raising long-term awareness of the city's diverse economic opportunities.

"Newcastle is an economic hub driven by innovation and skills and we want to share this fact with all of Australia," Cr Nelmes said.

"Attracting talented people as an economic stimulus strategy provides great value for money, with independent modelling showing that attracting 30 entrepreneurs to the city through New Move will help create new local jobs and millions of dollars in economic output.

"The grant is one great reason to consider a move to Newcastle, however there are 10,000 more reasons why Newcastle is the perfect place for entrepreneurial, community-minded and innovative people to create impact.

"The global labour market is changing. COVID-19 has shown that people can work from anywhere in the world. Increasingly young professionals are choosing smaller, but well-connected cities, like Newcastle due to their superior lifestyle.

"We know people can be apprehensive about moving cities. New Move and the 10,000 Reasons campaign promotes Newcastle as a safe, welcoming location for Australia's top entrepreneurial talent.

"Newcastle is home to world-class education, healthcare, and aerospace hubs, and an innovation ecosystem that supports start-ups. There's no shortage of opportunities for talented and skilled people.

"Significant investments have recently been delivered that underpins Newcastle's transformation, along with a pipeline of future city shaping projects including the reimagination of Broadmeadow sporting and entertainment precinct, John Hunter Hospital Innovation Precinct, University of Newcastle's increasing presence in the CBD and the international expansion of Newcastle Airport."

Deputy Lord Mayor Declan Clausen, who chairs the City's Strategy Committee, said that with technology evolving so rapidly, the business community needs people with specific skills.

"The injection of new skills and innovation brought by new talent attracted by New Move will help generate new economic opportunities with a flow-on-effect into increased local employment and opportunities for Novocastrians," Cr Clausen said.

"Through an advertising campaign focused on Sydney and the nation's capital cities, Newcastle will be showcased as a smart city and innovation hub supported by a vibrant culture and modern infrastructure.

"Newcastle is a gateway city - small enough to provide the charms of regional life but big enough to attract international investment and the best domestic and global talent.

"Talent attracts talent. New Move recipients will be asked to commit to be city ambassadors, helping further develop local skills, and activate our community to create future economic opportunities. In return, recipients will have access to co-working spaces, and networking events to build local business and community connections."

The New Move program is targeted at a metropolitan audience and will provide 30 successful applicants, who meet the eligibility criteria, with a \$10,000 relocation grant to be spent within the Newcastle local government area, in addition to a tailored program of ongoing networking opportunities and support.

The New Move program is funded by City of Newcastle within its existing economic development budget and was supported by a unanimous resolution of Council in December 2020.

Unlike previous regional relocation grants offered by other levels of Government, New Move is highly targeted and includes ongoing networking to ensure new residents have the best opportunity to deliver economic and social returns to the City.

Expressions of Interest are now open with an opportunity for applicants to explore and experience the local community, industry and culture at a weekend event taking place 9-11 April.



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Record \$40,000 awarded to help Port Stephens students with studies

A record-breaking \$40,000 has been awarded to 20 talented students as part of the 2021 Port Stephens Mayoral Academic Scholarships — the program's biggest ever scholarship pool.

Every year, Port Stephens Council partners with local businesses to support the next generation of local leaders as they begin their tertiary studies.

Port Stephens Mayor Ryan Palmer says the scholarships help local students realise their potential.

"The Mayoral Academic Scholarship Program is a fantastic way to support our local students in achieving their academic goals," said Mayor Palmer.

"The talent and drive of our students is remarkable and the competition for scholarships is as fierce as ever.

"This year, our applicants were so deserving that Port Stephens Council decided to fund 3 additional scholarships to help students with their studies.

"This brings our total to 20 scholarships proudly sponsored by local businesses and an incredible \$40,000 for students — our largest ever scholarship pool!" he said.

The sponsors for 2021 include Ampcontrol, Destination Port Stephens, Hunter Land, Hunter Readymixed Concrete, McDonald Jones Homes, MOJO Homes, Newcastle Airport, Port Stephens Council, Raymond Terrace Bowling Club, Salamander Bay Recycling, Soldiers Point Bowling Club, SUEZ Raymond Terrace Resource Recovery Centre, The Wests Group, Tomago Aluminium and Weathertex.

Mayor Palmer said the strong support from local businesses during difficult times is encouraging.

"The investment of one scholarship from a local business makes a big difference to a young person setting out on the next stage of their academic journey.

"It's fantastic to see so many business leaders supporting our students in their educational and professional development goals, even during a global pandemic.

"The Port Stephens business community is incredibly generous and knows the value of investing in our future leaders.

"I want to extend a huge thank you to all of the local businesses that contributed to the program this year. I know times have been tough for many businesses and to see this level of continued support is amazing.

"I wish all of our recipients the very best in achieving their goals and fulfilling their ambitions," he said.

\$20 million for world-class events in country towns

Major sporting, music and cultural events coming to regional NSW and existing shows will be helped with a new NSW Government funding program that will help showcase towns internationally and boost local economies.

Deputy Premier John Barilaro announced the \$20 million Regional Events Acceleration Fund will provide grants to boost major events in regional areas, creating valuable jobs for locals. "We have proven our ability to stage major events that accommodate large crowds in a COVID safe environment and now is the right time to bring entertainment to the bush and provide much needed stimulus to local economies," Mr Barilaro said.

"This funding will deliver major events that will create valuable jobs, keeping money local, as well as giving people the chance to see their favourite teams or performers in their hometown.

"By helping organisers to host bigger and better events we are giving regional communities greater access to entertainment and the opportunity to attend events they would otherwise have to travel to metropolitan areas to experience."

Applicants can apply for a minimum of \$100,000 to help bring major sporting, lifestyle, food and beverage, music, art and cultural events to regional NSW that provide national and international exposure.

Event organisers can also apply for between \$50,000 and \$200,000 for activities that enhance events, including extra seating, temporary fencing, accessibility infrastructure, additional stages at festivals, pop-up camping sites or temporary car parks.

Applications open on 23 February 2021 and close at 5 pm on 17 December 2021, or when funding is fully committed.

Event organisers, regional NSW councils, not-for-profit organisations, sporting bodies and Aboriginal Land Councils are eligible to apply.

For further information about the fund, including program guidelines, applications and eligibility, go to www.nsw.gov.au/REAFund.

The Mayoral Academic Scholarship Program



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Lake Mac makes a pledge for sustainability

Lake Macquarie City Council has announced the five pledges it will undertake as part of its commitment to the Cities Power Partnership.

After joining the partnership in 2020, Council undertook community consultation, with residents able to participate in a survey and share their opinion on which climate actions are most important for Lake Macquarie.

From this, Council's Sustainability and Environmental Systems teams were able to decide on the five pledges that will improve our City's environmental footprint.

Manager Environmental Systems Tim Browne said Council's participation in the Cities Power Partnership would strengthen the already established work being done in sustainability.

"We have chosen pledges that reflect what is most important to the community while aligning with Council's sustainability framework," Mr Browne said.

"Over the next year, we will be able to collaborate with other Councils and improve on the sustainability measures that are outlined in each of the pledges."

The Cities Power Partnership is Australia's largest network of cities and towns tackling climate change. Lake Mac works alongside 140 councils from across the country, representing over 11 million Australians.

Lake Macquarie City Council's Cities Power Partnership pledges are:

1. Support cycling through provision of adequate cycle lanes, bike parking and end-of-ride facilities
2. Develop education and behaviour-change programs to support local residents and businesses to tackle climate change through clean energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport
3. Encourage sustainable transport use such as public transport, walking and cycling through council transport planning and design
4. Support local community renewable energy projects, and encourage investment in community energy
5. Power Council operations by renewable energy, and set targets to increase the level of renewable power for Council operations over time

\$6 million boost for NSW visitor economy

The NSW Government is giving the State's visitor economy a \$6 million boost through funding and marketing programs to improve Sydney and regional economies and create more jobs.

Three funding streams to support regional businesses engaged in the visitor economy are open.

Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney Stuart Ayres said these activities, led by Destination NSW, would help position the NSW visitor economy for recovery and long-term growth.

"NSW is open for business and welcoming visitors, and business owners and entrepreneurs are hungry for growth and new opportunities – these programs will help visitor economy stakeholders to achieve just that," Mr Ayres said.

The \$6 million NSW Government visitor economy initiatives are:

- Tourism Product Development Fund (\$3 million – closes 31 March): Stream 1 - Refresh and Renew Fund offering \$10,000 grants to regional tourism operators to update their product or experience; Stream 2 - Experience Enhancement Fund providing between \$50,000 and \$150,000 in matched funding to assist operators upgrade existing accommodation to improve their star rating, upgrade business and leisure event venues and facilities, repurpose existing infrastructure to provide new facilities or experiences not currently available within the destination, or to create new tourism attractions or experiences
- Regional Business Event Development Fund (\$500,000 – closes 30 April): grants of up to \$30,000 to create, attract and support business events for regional NSW, and to motivate business event owners to incorporate regional NSW in their plans
- 'Sydney Love It Like You Mean It' campaign (\$2.5 million): full program includes radio, billboards, digital and social advertising promoting experiences and attractions across Greater Sydney. Television commercial airing from 14 February.

For information about the funding programs and to apply, visit www.destinationnsw.com.au

Skills on show as Prime Minister visits hunter training organisation

On 9 February Prime Minister Scott Morrison visited HVTCT's Skills Centre in Rutherford.

HVTC CEO Sharon Smith said it was a great opportunity for the PM to meet some of this year's cohort who commenced apprenticeships with the help of the Government's Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) Wage Subsidy.

"The subsidy was established to support employers to take on a new apprentice or trainee with the goal of creating 100,000 new apprenticeships and traineeships," Smith said.

"More than 75,000 new jobs have been created through the Program. Today the PM got to see firsthand the positive impact the program has had for some of our new starters and their employers.

"Vocational education and training will play a key role in preparing Australians with the skills they need for the jobs of the future.

"We were pleased to showcase our state-of-the-art training facility, which is operated by our Registered Training Organisation the Central Coast Community College (CCCC), where apprentices are learning core hands on skills that will benefit their careers both now and in the future."

Smith also spoke with Mr Morrison about the various Government wage incentives that have allowed HVTC to retain the majority of their hosted workforce during the pandemic.

HVTC is currently working with CCCC to deliver the Skills Highway PaTH Program across the Hunter and Central Coast.

The Program, which is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, aims to improve career and training pathways for young people through employability skills training, industry specific skills training relevant and a trial internship with a potential employer.

"The goal is to ultimately transition participants into an apprenticeship or traineeship or direct employment and a number of participants have successfully secured traineeships through the Program."

1st year electrical apprentice Crystal Jolly who is employed by HVTC and hosted to EnerMech talking with Prime Minister Scott Morrison



Council commits to completing Fern Bay shared pathway

Port Stephens Council has committed to the completion of the shared pathway in Fern Bay.

Port Stephens Mayor Ryan Palmer said while part of the path has been constructed, it's now time to complete the missing link.

"Safety for children and the growing population is hugely important to the Fern Bay community, and to this Council.

"Plus, shared pathways are a great way to encourage healthy activities like walking, running and cycling while improving accessibility for people on mobility scooters.

"We're already building part of this path and it's time to finish the job," Mayor Palmer said.

The completion of the pathway extends along Nelson Bay Road and will see a connection to the City of Newcastle's path extending all the way to Stockton.

The new pathway will be funded using a combination of developer contributions and funding from the Port Stephens 2020 budget allocation.

\$105,885 in funding available for Singleton sports clubs

A total of \$105,885 is available in the second and final round of the Singleton Sports Council Grants for this financial year, with applications open from 26 February 2021 to 25 March 2021.

The dollar-for-dollar grants program is open to members of the Sports Council to assist in programs and projects to support their sport and follows \$68,500 awarded for five projects announced in December under round one, including \$10,725 for upgraded lighting for Singleton Netball Association.

The other successful projects were:

- \$5,000 for Singleton Track and Field Club for a masterplan design for an athletics facility at Cook Park
- \$3,360 for Singleton Golf Club to replace fencing on Boonal and Queen streets
- \$5,900 for Singleton Triathlon Club for compliant road signs
- \$6,250 for Singleton United Rugby League Football Club for facilities and ground maintenance.

To be eligible, sporting groups must be affiliated with the Sports Council, attend meetings and be up-to-date with their membership fees.

Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, Council's Director Infrastructure and Planning said the program was designed to assist sports clubs to undertake improvements to facilities.

Gail Solman from Singleton Netball Association, Luke Boldery from Singleton Track and Field and Amanda McMahon, Singleton Council's Coordinator Recreation and Facilities.



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Singleton Town Centre Upgrade ahead of schedule

Work on the \$7 million Singleton Town Centre Upgrade – Stage 2 has reached a milestone with pavers being laid on John and Campbell streets as the project progresses two months ahead of schedule.

While the project was slated for completion in July 2021, Singleton Council principal contractor Robson Civil Projects is progressing more rapidly than planned. Light poles are also going in, the undergrounding of power is well advanced and next on the list is further footpath works including tree pit installation and finalising the new kerb and gutter construction.

Funded by \$3.5 million from the NSW Government's Resources for Regions program and the remainder by Singleton Council, the project continues the modernisation of John Street and Ryan Avenue that was completed in 2016, focusing on John Street from the Ryan Avenue intersection north to Campbell Street, and Campbell Street to the New England Highway.

Project Manager for Robson Civil Projects Brent Matthews said they were very proud to be involved in this project.

"It is exciting to see the streetscape starting to take final shape and we look forward to delivering a quality product for the Singleton community," he said.

"It has been a challenging and technical project, however work is progressing well and we are confident it will be delivered on time."



Faster payments for small business subcontractors

A new pilot program will assist small businesses that supply goods and services to larger businesses working for the NSW Government to be paid within 20 business days.

The current Faster Payments policy focuses on paying registered small businesses with government contracts within 5 business days. The pilot program will look at extending the policy to ensure larger companies providing goods and services to the NSW Government also pay their suppliers in a short timeframe.

The NSW Government will work with many suppliers to pilot the policy. This will help the government to gain insights on policy parameters, including the definition of small and large businesses and other implementation measures.

The pilot program is expected to be completed by June 2021. A NSW Government-wide policy is expected to be introduced following the pilot program.

Minister for Finance and Small Business Damien Tudehope said the NSW Government wants to do better when it comes to getting small businesses paid on time.

"Faster payments help businesses stay in business and that helps keep people in jobs, which is really important as we plan for a post-pandemic future," Mr Tudehope said.

The Garis Group wins Best Small Business Accounting Firm in Australia

Local accounting firm The Garis Group won best small business accounting firm in Australia at the nationally recognised Small Business Champion awards at the International Convention Centre in Darling Harbour, Sydney on 27 February.

The awards night was postponed several times throughout 2020 due to COVID-19, but with public health restrictions easing over the past few months, Precedent Productions were able to stage the nationally recognised event which honoured small businesses in 52 different categories.

The Accounting category was fiercely contested with 22 finalists from all corners of the country, but in a major coup for Hunter, The Garis Group were awarded the top prize.

Managing Director, John Garis and his team were on hand to accept the award on the night. "We are truly humbled to have won in our category for 2020. Without a doubt the past 12 months has been an incredibly challenging time for small business and we're extremely proud to have made such a significant contribution in the recovery process for all our wonderful clients."

Mr Garis acknowledged his colleagues in the accounting space for all their efforts in assisting small business throughout the country and praised his team for consistently demonstrating excellence in customer service and work ethic. "We're a family business and my team are an extension of that. We can't achieve anything without their dedication toward helping all our clients through the good times and the bad. I'm immensely proud of all of them and this award is justification for all their hard work and commitment to the business."



Grant funding key to revitalising Raymond Terrace

Port Stephens Council has committed to tapping into a range of grant funding programs to progress Raymond Terrace town centre improvements as part of the Raymond Terrace and Heatherbrae Strategy.

Port Stephens Mayor Ryan Palmer said while small improvements have been made recently and over the years, Raymond Terrace was ready for big solutions.

"There are many residents and businesses who've invested in Raymond Terrace and it's time for us to now start investing in this great town," Mayor Palmer said.

"People have been waiting a long time for these improvements but we need the dollars.

"Unlike Nelson Bay we don't have a funding source like smart parking to put back into the CBD," he said.

Council voted unanimously to apply for \$1 million grant funding under the NSW Government's Public Spaces Legacy Program and \$350,000 from the NSW Government's Your High Street Program.

It also committed to using \$200,000 from the Federal Government's Local Roads and community Infrastructure Program, and acknowledged the \$700,000 already committed from the Port Stephens 2020 program to upgrades to the Raymond Terrace CBD.



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Branxton to Greta Cycleway works kick off

Cessnock City Council has announced works have started on the construction of the Branxton to Greta cycleway. Council secured \$1,950,000 under Round 4 of the Australian Government's Building Better Regions Fund to build the 3.3 km off-road, shared cycleway.

Council will provide a co-contribution of \$650,000 to bring the cycleway to life that will connect the Branxton and Greta War Memorials. Cessnock City Mayor, Councillor Bob Pynsent said it's great to see works starting.

"This project has been a shared community vision, driven by the community who have tirelessly advocated to see it become a reality. Branxton-Greta Business Chamber and the local RSL sub-branches hard work has certainly been rewarded. It will be a unique way for current generations to recognise the sacrifice of local service personnel."

"It will offer residents and visitors another opportunity to enjoy our wonderful local government area and its rural surrounds. No doubt for many locals it will become a regular part of their weekend for walks and rides with family and friends."

Construction will be undertaken in a number of stages through until March 2022, subject to ground conditions and weather. During works there will be some unavoidable traffic disruptions. Council thanks residents for their understanding and patience. To keep up to date with project visit Council's Branxton to Greta Cycleway project page.

Further expansion of the cycleway to incorporate a war memorial aspect along the route is being co-ordinated by Hunter Anzac Memorial Limited.



Pokolbin takes out top NSW destination

Pokolbin has been announced by Wotif.com as the top NSW destination, and second place nationally, in the Wotif 2021 Aussie Town of the Year Awards.

Now in its fourth year, Wotif's Aussie Town of the Year awards recognise ten locations across the country for their contribution to Australian tourism. Designed to celebrate the many Australian cities, towns and regions worthy of the spotlight, the awards provide travellers with inspiration on where to go in Australia in 2021.

The 2021 Wotif Aussie Town of the Year awards are based on a data index which considers a destination's accommodation quality, affordability and traveller satisfaction on Wotif.com from January 2020 - September 2020.

This year's winning destinations, which NSW dominated overall, have been awarded based on their accommodation quality, affordability and traveller satisfaction. New to this year, the awards also recognise destinations that have met the changing needs of travellers over the last twelve months, by offering increased flexibility, good-value deals and appealing activities and attractions.

Commenting on the awards, Cessnock City Mayor, Councillor Bob Pynsent said it's no surprise Pokolbin is the top destination in our state. We are home to so many amazing tourism operators who provide a first class experience, surrounded by our natural beauty.

Amy Cooper, CEO of the Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association added "We are delighted that Pokolbin, in the heart of Wine Country, Hunter Valley has been recognised by the awards, particularly as they recognise the positive reviews of travellers. After a challenging 2020, we congratulate the businesses who have worked so hard to adapt to the changing needs of travellers and who have offered a warm welcome to the many new visitors to our region in 2020."

Seven local councils onboard to Australia's leading reusable cup scheme

Swap-and-go coffee cup scheme, Green Caffein, has launched a partnership with Hunter Joint Organisation to make it easier for locals to enjoy a takeaway coffee, without the eco guilt. Seven councils in the region are participating, with the scheme adding to the Hunter Joint Organisation's commitment to the circular economy and waste reduction.

Green Caffein's cups are based on the philosophy of the circular economy and are made from recycled materials. The goal is to design out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use as long as possible. This means that once a cup reaches the end of its viable life, Green Caffein collects the old cups and recycles them into new cups. It was this commitment to circular economy principles that particularly appealed to Hunter Joint Organisation.

"The Hunter region is going circular – we're working towards transitioning to a circular economy to reduce waste to landfill and innovate in industry. Single-use coffee cups don't fit the bill when it comes to a reuse economy, so we've partnered with swap-and-go pioneers Green Caffein to help Hunter cafes and communities make their next cup of coffee circular! Delivered as part of the Hunter Joint Organisation's regional Small Acts Big Change program, Green Caffein offers an Australian-made, sustainable, cup reuse scheme free of charge for cafes and coffee drinkers," says Bob Pynsent, Hunter Joint Organisation Board Chair and Mayor, Cessnock City Council.

Green Caffein's reusable cup scheme makes being eco-friendly a simple choice for coffee drinkers. Consumers simply need to download the Green Caffein app and sign up, then get your reusable cup from a participating café. After they enjoy their cup of coffee, they then return the cup to any Green Caffein café. As long as the cup is returned within 30 days, it's completely free to use.

It's easy for cafes too, with no fee to join the scheme. Green Caffein is leading the reusable drive in Australia and showing just how easy it can be to ditch single-use cups. With over 18,600 people using it in over 580 cafés Australia-wide, it's the biggest roll-out of a reusable system anywhere in the country.



Photo by Tim Douglas from Pexels

Overhaul of the Singleton Gym and Swim



Belgravia Leisure Personal Trainer Nicky Moody, Singleton Council's Manager Corporate and Community Services Mark Wible, Coordinator Community Services Nicole Lonsdale and Belgravia Leisure Area Manager Amanda Lenton

Singleton Council is spending \$269,000 to refurbish the Singleton Gym and Swim at the top of the game.

All fitness equipment in the health club has been replaced, including the introduction of weightlifting platforms, more variety in cardio machines, and a brand-new spin cycle studio.

The gym overhaul is another example of Council's commitment to sport and recreation infrastructure in 2021, which also includes a new surface for Howe Park, sport lighting upgrades and the continued roll out of irrigation systems for sporting fields.

Anthony Egan, Council's Director Business and Community Services said the new equipment was an investment in the health and wellbeing of the Singleton community.

"We are starting 2021 off on the right foot – and that means the best possible facilities to get people stuck into their new year's resolutions and fitness goals," he said.

"We've seen during COVID that exercise is a really important component for one's physical and mental health and we are really proud of the facilities right across Singleton, from sports fields to cycleways.

"We have a great partnership with Belgravia Leisure to deliver programs to help you get where you want to be, and ensuring the Gym and Swim offers members state-of-the-art fitness equipment goes a long way to support this."



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GAINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Caitlin Powell
PerformHR

Recent trends in leadership studies demonstrate that creating an engaged workforce lowers absenteeism and turnover, and increases productivity and profitability. A well designed HR transformation strategy should articulate new ways of operating, communicating and engaging. Organisations will need to identify what capabilities they have across their operations, and what capabilities they will need to take the business forward in a world that will require more organisational agility. So, what are some things leaders can do to foster employee engagement?

Inspire your people using the strategic vision

You have invested a lot of energy into developing the strategic purpose and vision of your business because it is what you believe in. Don't keep it all to yourself! Sharing your vision is a powerful tool for motivating people. Rather than forcing your people down a path with the 'what', guide them by using your strategic vision as the 'why'.

Hire people based on your values set

Underpinning your strategic vision is your values, which influence the way you work and the way you make decisions for your business. If you are not living by these values, then they can become meaningless buzzwords. A good place to start is to bring people on board who are already aligned to your value set. By hiring people based on their value set, it is easy to create a sense of belonging amongst employees. Social identity theory spells this out perfectly in that people will be more motivated and engaged when they feel 'at home' at work.

Be authentic

Like your values, your leadership will become meaningless if you can't remain genuine by staying true to your vision, your

values and yourself. Leverage your strengths, acknowledge your weaknesses, and be forever trying to improve. Self-awareness is humbling, and by demonstrating an openness and understanding of yourself, it gives permission for others to follow suit.

Communicate

A lack of communication is often a top scorer in employee engagement surveys. Gallup research shows that consistent communication, no matter the method, is connected to higher employee engagement. But again, make it meaningful. Relate it to the strategic vision and how it brings meaning to people's work. Relate it to how it aligns with your values. And most importantly, relate it to how it impacts them. People are always interested in understanding 'what's in it for me?', especially in times of change.

Listen

Don't forget that it's a two-way street. Your people are the ones involved in the action – they will know a thing or two about their day job. Employee lead change initiatives are an empowering practice that results in ownership, accountability and engagement. By setting the boundaries and providing a clear vision for what you want to achieve, employees can build their own solution to be proud of, champion and embed in the organisation.

While it might seem counterintuitive at first to outsource crucial HR functions to an outsourced provider, the advantages can be a more tight-knit, productive, engaged and goal-driven internal team.

For further information or for help to develop a customised HR transformation roadmap to suit your unique requirements, contact PerformHR on 1300 406 005.



As a Human Resources generalist with a special interest in Organisational Development, Caitlin is passionate about people, employee engagement, and continuous improvement. Connecting people to their purpose to find meaning in their work, and exploring leadership capability to promote high performing teams is something she has a keen interest in.

MOMENTUM IS KEY

Michelle Crawford
Being More Human

The word Momentum means "the impetus gained by a moving object". Each one of us are either procrastinating or moving forward in our lives and our businesses, thereby creating momentum.

We all know the feeling of having something on our to do list that we just bluntly do not want to do. It might be that we do not know how, it may be that we don't like doing it, perhaps we are just feeling rebellious.

Here are some ways to keep yourself focused and generating momentum when it is tempting just to procrastinate!

- 1. Find what drives you.** Know what motivates you and allow yourself to do more of it.
- 2. Plan but be open to changing direction.** The best plans are the ones that acknowledge things change.
- 3. Set SMARTER goals. Make sure you set goals.** Follow the age-old goal setting formula for success.
- 4. Commit wholeheartedly.** Jump in with two feet and your whole body, do not hold anything back.
- 5. Remember why you started.** Think back to the original reasons you started the project or business.
- 6. Change your environment.** Your surroundings have a significant impact on your motivation, choose wisely.
- 7. Be patient.** This is underrated. Your ability to be cool, calm, and collected when everyone else is in a frenzy is priceless.

For many of us we can allow ourselves to feel overwhelmed by other people and their opinions, by tasks or just by the sheer requirements of being able to live a modern life. When we are in this state it is easy to feel like we do not know what action to take, or what is the right action.

This is the trick to momentum. Any aligned action is the right action. Provided the action lines up with your beliefs, thoughts, and principles then it will be right in that moment. Mostly though when we feel stuck, any action will turn into the right action to get us through it.

Leaders, business owners and people loose so much by waiting around, wanting to line up all the ducks in each situation before being willing to act. You cannot build and sustain momentum in an organization without being able to new opportunities. You cannot do this unless you can successfully anticipate the unexpected. You must identify both threats and opportunities that could come from organisations in and outside your market.

To move beyond just making progress and to evolve to generating momentum, humans across the organisation must embrace risk as the new normal. This means that leaders are now largely responsible for tapping into the human potential of their followers. To inspire, motivate and to lead toward creating momentum. This is the role of our leaders.



Michelle Crawford is the Chief Conversationalist and the amazing brain behind Being More Human. With more than 20 years of experience providing guidance, leadership development, Human Resources and strengthening the culture in organisations across 20 industries has shown her one truth – modern businesses are losing their humanity.

SIX TOP TIPS FOR ERP SOFTWARE SELECTION FOR MANUFACTURERS

Michael Graham
Cutcher & Neale

Unified cloud systems are essential for the modern multi-faceted manufacturing business. Managing your accounting, sales and inventory data in one place saves your business time and money – and makes your operational processes and supply chain management more efficient.

It's important to keep these six tips in mind as you seek to modernise your business systems:

1. Have a clear understanding of the top two or three reasons why you need a system review

Different ERP solutions will offer different levels of value, but there are generally two or three drivers that will see your return on investment. This could be supply chain optimization, lower inventory carrying costs, higher fulfilment rates and higher customer service levels.

2. Don't have hard and fast dates in mind

Improving your businesses systems is not a set and forget exercise, and not a one-off event. It's an on-going process that requires a commitment to continuous improvement

3. Don't expect a single solution to solve all your company's problems

Start with the minimum viable configuration to solve the most pressing issues. For example, if you need to get your financials under control, you could start with that module. Or if you have a disjointed supply chain then you could focus on tightening up that process, and then take on new functionalities as required.

4. Form a multi-disciplinary project team

This will ensure your chosen system suits all your departments or divisions. There will be issues in some departments that management, or other departments are not aware of.

5. Don't make decisions by consensus

Not every decision will suit every person or department. Solicit the feedback from everyone and use that information to make the best decision possible but don't expect everyone to agree on everything!

6. Keep an open mind

Success will depend on how you adapt to the new software or business system, so keep an open mind about how processes might need to change. Just because you've always done something one way, doesn't mean it is the most efficient way.

As the industrial manufacturing and distribution landscape continues to evolve, more companies will be turning to technology to help them navigate the changes as efficiently and effectively as possible. Most of these initiatives will involve selecting a new ERP—a process that should never be rushed or taken lightly.

Successfully executing enterprise cloud ERP strategy also means turning to the world's most proven, trusted and deployed cloud ERP solution - NetSuite. Cutcher & Neale are an Oracle NetSuite Solution Provider, and with over 100+ combined ERP implementations, are well positioned to provide a complete technology solution. For further information contact Cutcher + Neale on (02) 4928 8500 or email michael.graham@cutcher.com.au



Michael Graham is Associate of Cutcher & Neale's Business Software & System Solutions division. He has been responsible for the project management of numerous large operational software implementations in the Manufacturing, Jobbing, Services and Wholesale Distribution sectors. Michael's skills have been employed to write detailed reports highlighting areas in which automation and efficiency can be gained and controls tightened. His insights have led to major cost savings and significant productivity improvements for numerous organisations. As a proficient data analysis, Michael is able to assess operational processes, integrate systems, combine data flows and provide tailored reporting solutions for key stakeholders.

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Currency fluctuations have ramifications for homeowners

Steve Dick
Movable

It was only 12 months ago that I was preparing for a trip of a lifetime to Italy, Tuscany with a group of friends whose wives were all turning 60.

My wife became quite adept at currency trading and buying, trying to squeeze the most out of an Aussie dollar hovering around US\$67c.

Fast forward, and we all know the world changed and I never did get the trip. I'm not even sure I want to travel now. For me, the magic of international travel has faded.

Confidence, demand, iron ore – interest rates must go up!

While the dream fades, our dollar goes from strength to strength due to our resources hedged economy. At the time of writing, our dollar was up more than 20% against the US and nearly 8% on the Euro. Our iron ore price is up from US\$84/t to US\$172/t – no wonder mining magnates such as Twigg Forest are happy with the Chinese. As we move to discussions on big batteries and green energy in this region, our coal price has risen 39%, and despite China's ban on Aussie coal export, volumes through our Port are only down 3%.

For many not working in the resources industries, this could be a classic case of so what? Moreover, a strong dollar means we can all buy things on the net from overseas far cheaper.

The "so what" significance is the pressure the higher dollar is putting on the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), and its 2019 promise not to raise interest rates for five years. This pledge is looking doubtful.

In simple terms, our ability to dig up a hot commodity such as iron ore, combined with a vaccine that encourages confidence and a government hellbent on stimulating the economy, Australia looks extremely attractive to international markets. Consequently, global capital starts flooding in, which not even the RBA can control. In this competitive environment, interest rates on bonds will be the first to rise along with inflation. In this environment, how will your lender react as its cost of money rises?

Hot property markets

Iron is not Australia's only hot market. I have never seen a property market so full of steam. Everyone in the industry has stories of properties going way above the agent's expectation and owners' dreams.

At MOVABLE, we have our own stories of Sydney buyers moving to Newcastle because they can now work online or acquire a lifestyle weekender close to home. One such auction by Jason Maxwell went \$650,000 above the reserve.

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If you are selling any property in this market, you'd be brave not to sell by auction, while baulking on a property sale exposes you to the pressure building in the background on interest rates.

For further information contact Movable on (02) 4915 3000



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

Build-to-rent a boost for housing

The Property Council of Australia has welcomed the commencement of changes designed to implement a fit for purpose planning and tax regime to get build-to-rent housing off the ground and deliver long term benefits to the people of NSW.

"Build-to-rent delivers much needed housing supply, is good for renters, keeps jobs in construction and is also great for our economy," NSW Executive Director Jane Fitzgerald said.

"Build-to-rent can offer longer term rental tenure while also providing professional lease and facility management; all of these can improve the rental experience greatly as overseas experience has shown.

Ms Fitzgerald said the changes would provide a shot in the arm for build-to-rent in NSW by providing a planning and tax framework designed specifically with the new sector in mind.

"The planning changes not only acknowledge that build-to-rent is a different housing 'product' to build-to-sell but also provide clear guidance to investors, developers and consent authorities.

"The tax changes will improve certainty for investors and remove disincentives that would have held the sector back."

Ms Fitzgerald said data released this week by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment showed a dramatic

decline in the Housing Supply Forecast for the next five years for Sydney.

"International experience demonstrates strongly that build-to-rent is exactly the right response to a cyclical downturn in housing supply so the Treasurer and Planning Minister deserve kudos for making these changes right now," Ms Fitzgerald said.

"There is no silver bullet to reverse the trend this week's data confirmed but the post-GFC experience in the US and UK shows build-to-rent can deliver housing supply through, and out of, an economic downturn like the one COVID has delivered.

The changes which commenced on 12 February see:

- Specific planning rules that 'define' build-to-rent as purpose built housing with more than 50 dwellings that is unable to be subdivided for at least 15 years.
- A specific planning pathway for large scale build-to-rent projects (over \$100 million) where they will be dealt with as State Significant Developments.
- Greater flexibility in some planning rules to ensure the special design and amenity features of overseas build-to-rent developments can be delivered such as a greater proportion of shared or communal spaces.

Changes to land tax so it does not act as a disincentive to the growth of the build-to-rent sector.

Hunter detached home approvals buoyant

Latest ABS figures on new home building approvals indicate that detached home activity across the Hunter and Central Coast performed strongly in 2020, despite the impact of the global pandemic and a recession, reported the Housing Industry Association.

"In 2020 detached dwelling approvals increased 21 per cent in the Hunter and 15% on the Central Coast compared to the 2019 calendar year. Accounting for 72.1% of all approvals in the Hunter and 64.7% on the Central Coast detached homes increasingly remain the preference for home buyers locally," said Craig Jennion, HIA Hunter Executive Director.

"Over the same period multi-unit approvals decreased by 45% in the Hunter and 28% on the Central Coast compared to the year earlier. As has occurred elsewhere in the country there appears to be structural changes in the demand for multi-unit housing as a result of a change in consumer preferences."

"In total 5,896 approvals were issued for new dwellings across the HIA Hunter region during 2020, a decrease of 8% from the previous year. The Hunter approvals decreased by 9% while on the Central Coast the fall was 5%. Despite the slight deterioration in new home approvals in 2020, it was a solid result considering the headwinds the industry faced."

"Much of the heavy lifting for the residential sector continues to occur in the Lower Hunter, with the local government areas of Lake Macquarie, Maitland and Newcastle continuing to be the top three locations for approvals, accounting for 58.9% of total approvals," explained Mr Jennion.

"Cessnock LGA took out the title of 'biggest mover' with total housing approvals increasing by 28%. Detached dwelling increasing 32% while multi-unit approvals increased by 134%."

"Looking ahead, we are forecasting residential building activity to remain solid on the back of the HomeBuilder stimulus, low interest rates, rising house prices and a demographic shift in demand towards detached housing and regional areas. Together this should ensure ongoing demand for new homes albeit at a level below that observed in recent years," concluded Mr Jennion.



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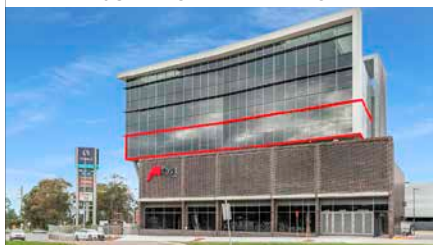
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BUTLERS BUSINESS LAWYERS

Butlers Business Lawyers has announced the admission to the Supreme Court of NSW of **Emma Shannon** on 24 February. Emma has been clerking with Butlers since 2019 and will be staying on as a solicitor. With her combined degree in Business and Law from the University of Newcastle, Emma is a natural fit with Butlers Business Lawyers' commercial and business solicitors.



SWS LAWYERS

Corporate and commercial lawyer **Derek Charge** has joined SWS Lawyers as Managing Principal. Derek returns to the Hunter after more than a decade with ASX and NYSE listed companies. He has held senior executive commercial and operations roles leading large teams in manufacturing, mining and international commodities trading businesses. Derek is now working with SWS Lawyers' clients, offering a unique and bespoke combination of technical legal services with his first-class commercial experience.



DELANEY ROBERTS SPECIALIST FAMILY LAWYERS

Blaise Minter joins Delaney Roberts Specialist Family Lawyers as a Senior Associate in their Estate Litigation Team. Blaise has experience in the area of estate litigation, estate administration and estate planning. Blaise is experienced in applications for grants of probate, letters of administration and reseals, and dealing with the various issues that may arise in the administration of complex estates. She is also experienced in estate planning, contested estate litigation, family provision applications and probate suits, acting for both estates and claimants.



HUNTER LOCAL JOBS & SKILLS TASKFORCE

Getting Hunter job seekers skilled and back to work is the highest priority for **Karla Notman**, the newly appointed Hunter Employment Facilitator. Karla is one of 25 Australian Government appointed employment facilitators supporting the delivery of its \$62.8 million Local Jobs Program across Australia. She will also chair a new Hunter Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce. Karla is delivering the program through the Hunter business coaching and training firm The Finer Line.



PKF

Experienced business advisory expert, **Chad Russell** has taken on the role of Director in PKF Sydney & Newcastle's Business Advisory team. Chad's appointment comes after he celebrated his 20-year anniversary with the firm. Owning and running a business is not easy and it's something that Chad has spent many years understanding so that he can help his clients – business owners – achieve their goals. Chad has learnt that his focus needs to be on more than the accounting and tax, rather on the business and wellbeing of his client.



BAKER LOVE LAWYERS

Baker Love has appointed family law solicitor, **Louise Neilson**, who brings nearly two decades of experience. She was admitted to the Supreme Court in 2010. Louise says she is people-focussed and is there to help clients make good decisions in matters that are often quite complex and emotional. She also draws on her own personal experience as a mother who went through a less than amicable divorce herself.

LET US KNOW ABOUT YOUR PEOPLE!

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.





TOP 5 TO DO'S FOR EVERY HR MANAGER IN 2021

Michelle Dawson
Emily Dempster
Moray & Agnew Lawyers

Know what can and can't be done in requiring employees to have COVID-19 vaccines

Employers considering mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations should watch this space as directions from state and federal governments are likely to affect what can and can't be mandated. Ultimately, the issue for employers is likely to centre on whether

any requirement to be vaccinated is a 'reasonable and lawful directive' (and this may well be guided, on a case-by-case basis, by reference to the inherent requirements of an employee's role).

Be prepared for the end of JobKeeper

With the JobKeeper scheme (and the directives which the scheme enabled) ending on 28 March 2021, it is likely that a significant number of redundancies will result. Employers should ensure that redundancies are implemented according to the Fair Work Act 2009, including consultation and redeployment. Employers should consider commencing any consultation process prior to the end of JobKeeper to ensure adequate time for consultation and to give employees the appropriate period of notice.

Get ready for significant changes to the Fair Work Act

Following the introduction of the Government's IR omnibus legislation (the Bill) into Parliament in December 2020, it's likely that there will be significant changes to the Fair Work Act this year, particularly around casual employment, enterprise agreement making and approvals, flexible work directions and wage underpayments. Employers should avidly watch this space for developments. In the meantime, employers must continue to comply with the current workplace laws.

Review the casual workforce

The Bill proposes to (among other things) insert a definition of 'casual employee' in the Fair Work Act which provides that an employee will be a casual if they accept an offer of employment that does not give a firm advanced commitment to continuing and indefinite work according to an agreed pattern. The definition focuses on the offer and acceptance and takes a "once a casual, always a casual" approach, such that whether the employee is subsequently treated more like a permanent employee (albeit, without accruing leave) will be irrelevant.



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Employers should ensure that: all casuals are properly identified as casuals in their employment contracts; the casual loadings are properly specified with easily identifiable amounts; and they identify employees that may meet the criteria for conversion (noting that the relevant Award/Enterprise Agreement may already provide for this). A new 'Casual Employment Information Statement' from the Fair Work Ombudsman is also on the horizon.

Consider working from home arrangements

During 2020 many employees in Australia worked from home for a period, and some still are. While many employees like it that way, many employers would prefer to have their employees back in their traditional workplaces as soon as it is safe and otherwise appropriate (including by reference to government guidelines). An employer's ability to give reasonable and lawful directives (including regarding where work is to take place) remains. Provided that: it is safe for employees to return to work; government directions permit; and the employee's usual employment conditions and any relevant personal circumstances are properly accounted for, an employer will generally be entitled to direct an employee as to their place of work in the way it reasonably considers best.

Employers should expect an increase in requests for flexible work arrangements as well as for individual flexibility arrangements under applicable awards. Employers should ensure consistency in

approach to these, and that they properly understand each concept, their differences, the respective eligibility requirements and how to properly contend with requests.

As we go forth into 2021 – clearly to be an eventful year in this space – if you have any questions or require assistance on any of these issues or others, Moray & Agnew's Workplace team is well placed and prepared to assist.

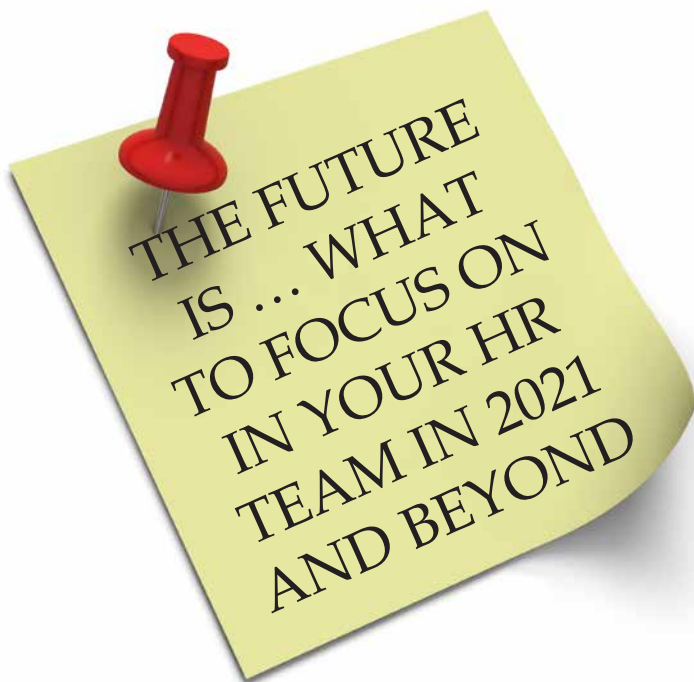
For further information contact Michelle Dawson on (02) 4911 5451, email mdawson@moray.com.au or Emily Dempster on (03) 8687 7351, email edempster@moray.com.au



Michelle Dawson is a Partner at Moray & Agnew. She is a highly experienced practitioner with over 24 years' experience in the legal industry, the last 15 specialising in workplace relations law.



Emily Dempster, Special Counsel at Moray & Agnew, is an experienced workplace lawyer, providing legal advice and representation in all areas of workplace relations, industrial relations and general employment law.



Stacey Kelly
Seed People Consulting

2020 was a catalyst for change; for society, for businesses and, in particular, for HR teams. In October 2020, the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) surveyed HR professionals, finding that they felt their influence on their respective executive teams had increased by almost 15% over the COVID19 period.

So how do you use this influence to maximise your partnership with the leaders and employees in your business, enabling and championing an organisation that is future-fit?

Here are some key trends we are seeing emerge for the role of HR, in 2021 and beyond.

The future is: Personalised

The idea of wellbeing has expanded because work isn't a place you go to anymore, it now comes to you. It's not just about physical wellbeing programs (eg. Quit Smoking campaigns, gym memberships etc); it's also emotional support, building connection and relationships in a remote environment, establishing a culture of psychological safety and normalising boundaries between work and home for our employees.

In their recently published '2021 Global Human Capital Trends' paper, Deloitte recognised this as the integration of wellbeing into work; not as a set of side benefits, but in a deliberate way that is meaningful and personalised to the individual. We also see this in the trend for organisations to shift from measuring engagement across their organisation, to measuring wellbeing. At an Executive Leadership level, this measurement is effectively captured using tools such as the Global Leadership Wellbeing Survey, within which Executives can explore the impact of both Work and Lifestyle on their overarching wellbeing; ultimately leading to understanding the impact on their teams and organisations as a whole.

Flexible work, not just in hours but also in place of work, is here to stay. Whilst not viable in every workplace (eg. Hospitality or bricks and mortar retail), we are regularly having discussions with clients about there being no return 'back to normal'.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to where and when we work. Approaches to work location and hours need to be overlaid with customer needs and achieving business outcomes. Finding the right fit that works for your employees and organisation, without losing focus on culture and team, as well as personal work preferences, is key.

The future is : Building the right capabilities

2020 was a catalyst, pushing organisations to clarify the types of capabilities which are consistently required across all organisations to not just survive, but thrive into the future.

The World Economic Forum's 'Future of Jobs Report' (October 2020), suggested that 50% of all employees will need reskilling by 2025, especially given the adopting of technology. This sees a shift in focus to developing dynamic skills across an organisation – giving employees and leaders what they need to leverage their knowledge, adapt and work to their potential, not just in what

they were hired to do but also in flexible, cross-functional teams. These 'right capabilities' are focused on:

- **Problem Solving** - developing the ability to think critically, be creative and innovative in how we solve problems, whilst using initiative (ie. Seek out the problems to solve) is critical. A common framework which has been effectively used in this space is Design Thinking, focusing on ideation, codesign and iterative problem solving to come up with a solution
- **'Soft Skills'** – that are the hardest to actually do! Here, we are talking about the huge set of people-centric capabilities: growing empathy, compassion, emotional intelligence, curiosity, effective (and positive) influencing, resilience and coaching (with leaders moving away from supervising, to co-creating and empowering their teams). These 'soft skills' will enable both leaders and talent to traverse departments and roles successfully
- **Leveraging Data** – Access to accurate and timely data, interpretation of data to tell the story and design of actions based on insights. This will be the defining competitive advantage for organisations into the next decade. Embrace this, and your organisation will have the edge – both in business, and in talent.

The future is: Underpinned and enables by technology and a growth mindset

Each of the above trends, as well as the broader HR remit, are enabled by an organisational culture that embraces a growth mindset and technology.

Carol Dweck (the mother of the growth mindset psychology), describes "In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point."

Embraced by forward-thinking organisations across the globe, including Microsoft, HP and GE, growth mindset focuses on a state of 'perpetual learning' for all employees, at all levels.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella intentionally set a long term, strategic change, based on engaging senior leaders to role model growth mindset behaviours, and the creation of online modules to educate and support the strategy across the organisation. Microsoft has experienced increases in innovation, collaboration and credits the growth mindset approach with its ability to grow its market position in a staunchly competitive tech market.

From a technology perspective, we see the growth of AI and automation in HR systems – not replacing HR, but integrated within HR practices. Whether this is in recruitment (using AI in candidate screening and shortlisting), capability development (with virtual and augmented reality enabling immersion programs to build capabilities) or tier-one HR enquiry resolution (using chatbots and AI), technology enables HR teams to focus on the true 'human' elements of our role.

Takeaways for HR teams

HR is shifting – whilst remaining incredibly broad and sometimes complex, the support of 'people' and the associated initiatives is more important than ever. How we approach our roles and leverage our ability to 'have a seat at the table' in the next few years is critical, and taking the time to personalise these solutions to our people and the objectives of the organisation is a great place to start.

For further information, contact Stacey on (02) 4967 6695 or visit www.seedpeopleconsulting.com.au



Stacey Kelly is the Founder and Principal Consultant at Seed People Consulting. Stacey and the team partner with organisations to deliver tailored solutions in culture development, leadership development, team development and change management. The Seed People Consulting team are passionate about supporting organisations create dynamic, inspiring and effective workplaces.




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WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM THE HUNTER'S ORGANISATIONAL LEADERS

Sam Robinson
LKS Quaero

As a management consultant who works in leadership development, it's been my privilege to support leaders and organisations across many different industries. Every organisation and sector naturally has its own range of challenges and opportunities. It's been particularly exciting to work with people from across the Hunter and see how many different kinds of work link together to sustain and grow our local communities.

As in so many parts of life, among that difference there are lots of commonalities that unite us. I'd like to share with you a few useful lessons I've learned and had reinforced while helping to sustain and improve organisations in the Hunter Valley.

Build a united leadership team with a consistent toolkit

Do people in different parts of your organisation understand how their work fits together to meet your strategy and overarching goals? Lots of organisations feel divided because they lack a common language and toolkit to connect "my work" back up to "our work". Getting all your leaders on the same page through a commitment to leadership development is a positive decision you can make in creating a more productive and united culture. With the means to get work done better, your leaders will set the expectations for the rest of the organisation, building momentum and better value.

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Find time to work on the future

Working on things that won't come to fruition for a while doesn't happen by accident. People in organisations tend to be highly focused on answering short term needs without taking the time to slow down and consider "what's the right stuff to work on?"

When you're snowed under, it's both difficult and necessary to take that time. Building a plan you can stick to will help focus that work and get it done in the right way by the right people, with a clear and inspiring purpose that is understood by people at every organisational level. If the problem is that you haven't stuck to the plan in the past, it's time to implement a continuous improvement cycle: plan, do, check, and adjust. Reflection now will save time to focus on the meaningful stuff for the long term.

Understand your real culture

We talk about a culture as a group of people who share mythologies (or beliefs). You can start to identify a culture through what people say and how people behave. If you have strong positive or negative mythologies in your organisation, they inform the culture, and it's the culture that ultimately delivers the results. If you genuinely understand what people are doing and saying, and how that's informed by what the leadership do and say, you have a solid foundation for what needs to shift in order to improve your results.

In my line of work, I'm very lucky to have opportunities to share learning with lots of thoughtful, passionate people. There's always more to learn and share with each other when it comes to the development of excellent leaders and successful organisations. Staying curious is a good start.

For more information on supporting leaders to build positive and productive organisations, contact LKS Quaero at enquiries@lksquaero.com or (02) 4312 4303.



Sam Robinson is Managing Director of LKS Quaero. He works in leadership development, change management, organisational structure, and culture. Sam helps leaders to succeed by connecting people, relationships, systems, and structures. He has worked across the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors."

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Christina Manfre
PKF Sydney

All leaders are different, and there are many characteristics that make up a great leader. Here are seven leadership qualities that will make you a more effective leader:



- 1. Communicate powerfully** – Close your mouth and open your ears. Truly listening encourages them to speak more openly and honestly.
 - 2. Empathy** – Cultivating empathy is the precursor to almost every other ‘soft skill’ required for leadership, from self-awareness to critical thinking.
 - 3. Leading by example** – Get your hands dirty. Actions speak louder than words.
 - 4. Integrity** – An effective leader is one who makes the decision that is right, not the one that is easy.
 - 5. Clarity** – Be clear with your intentions, vision and goals. This gives you a clear direction and clarity as to how you focus your time.
 - 6. Attitude** – Create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and inspire others to be the best version of themselves.
 - 7. Accountability** – Everyone makes mistakes, including leaders. How you deal with these mistakes is what sets you apart from the rest.
- Everyone can be a great leader if they cultivate the right mindset.

For more information contact Christina on (02) 8346 6000 or email cmanfre@pkf.com.au



Christina Manfre is a Partner and works in the Business Advisory Services team in our Sydney office. With extensive experience in professional practice, Christina has worked with a diverse group of small to medium privately held businesses across multiple industries. The clients range from start-up to mature companies. She has also worked with high net worth family groups.

MONICA CLARE RECRUITMENT APPOINTED TO HUNTER WATER RECRUITMENT SERVICES PANEL

Monica Clare Recruitment has been appointed to the Hunter Water Recruitment Services Panel. Monica Clare Recruitment join a panel of four esteemed recruitment agencies and are the only new addition to the group in 2021.

The tender win comes at an important time for Monica Clare Recruitment, coinciding with their five-year anniversary.

“Winning the tender on the same week as our anniversary offered great symbolism for the success of our business,” Co-Founder and Business Director Clare Ferguson said.

“After coming out of the most difficult year we have ever seen in the recruitment industry, it’s been uplifting to kick-start 2021 joining the Hunter Water Recruitment Services Panel. It very much feels as though we’ve entered a new league: we’ve gone from a small boutique agency and now we are pitched against the national players,” she continued.

The appointment highlighted a new focus in the business: diversity and inclusion.

“It’s raised a lot of questions for us on how we can really make a difference in this space, instead of just talking about it. We

now have an internal diversity and inclusion council that meets monthly, we are a tier one member of Diversity Council Australia and we’ve solidified a pledge with attainable goals.”

Monica Clare Recruitment had been invited to tender before 2020, then just a team of six. They did not feel they had the capability to service the agreement. Now a team 18-strong, Monica Clare Recruitment has the knowledge, networks and expertise.

“In the last five years Monica Clare Recruitment has grown to become the largest white-collar recruitment firm in the region. The tender crosses many disciplines but focuses on engineering and technology. We know we have the knowledge and expertise to meet the needs of this tier one client, while offering a catered and boutique experience.”

“We have intricate knowledge of Hunter Water in the Monica Clare Recruitment team with Simon Rutten, Jenny Newell and Georgia Harvey.”

Recruitment Director Simon Rutten says, “Personally, I look forward to working with the Hunter Water team again. We are excited about the opportunities to connect candidates with one of Newcastle’s employers of choice”.

The Monica Clare Recruitment leadership team



EIGHT RECRUITMENT CELEBRATES A DECADE IN BUSINESS

Eight Recruitment was established in 2011 with a clear purpose, to turn the sector on its head. Ten years later Eight continues to be one of the region’s leading recruitment agencies in the Hunter region.

For the Founder, Nadene Barretto it was working in an industry that didn’t cater for flexibility that led her to establish a company that challenged the status quo.

“Having worked in the industry for more than a decade, I knew it needed a little shakeup. Having three kids all under the age of three I found it hard to navigate that balance so many companies encourage but not many enforce,” Nadene said.

For the first four years, Nadene worked by herself specialising within the mining industry. Now, Eight Recruitment has seven dedicated staff recruiting across a wide range of industries across New South Wales with plans to expand.

“Both my husband Steve and I put our staff at the forefront of everything we do. The majority of our staff are working mums and we wanted to create an environment that was flexible and would cater to their needs,” Nadene said.

“Nadene ensures that our staff, clients and candidates not only succeed but have fun doing so, her wild antics and loud laugh combined with her dedication, ensure all involved are having fun whilst achieving their goals,” Steve said.

Over the last decade, Eight Recruitment been huge supporters of local sports, from sponsoring the women’s rugby division to bring parity in prize money to supporting the Hunter Wildfires as they represented the region in the Shute Shield comp for the first time in 22 years.

DEFENCE IN THE HUNTER

Defence is a critical sector for the Hunter region's economy, injecting well over \$1 billion annually and employing thousands of skilled people.

It has a long history in the region, including ship building and maintenance as well as land-based defence, highlighted by the 15,000 ha Singleton Military Area which includes the Lone Pine Barracks.

It is air-based defence that is currently experiencing massive growth, centred on the 56 F-35A Lightning II fighters that will be based at the RAAF Base at Williamtown.

This is being supported by the continued release of quality land at the Williamtown precinct that is growing the area as a globally-recognised centre for defence and aerospace.

Defence Primes in the region include BAE Systems, Boeing Defence, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and Thales. A wide array of other defence focussed businesses are also present.

Other local businesses are also finding that servicing the defence sector can be a valuable component of their operations.

There is increasing opportunities for other local businesses. There are a number of local business and government organisations that can help highlight new opportunities and help with the process of making a business defence-ready.

RAAF Base Williamtown turns 80

RAAF Base Williamtown celebrated its 80th anniversary on February 15 with a small celebration hosted by Deputy Air Commander Australia Air Commodore Benjamin Sleeman at Fighter World Aviation Museum, NSW.

RAAF Station Williamtown officially opened in 1941 with just three officers and 96 airmen, and was established to provide protection for the strategic port of Newcastle and steel manufacturing facilities of the Hunter region.

Initially served by four runways, the base was home to the Williamtown Flying School. Today, Williamtown is the largest fast-jet base providing critical support to Air Force's air power capability for Australia.

Senior ADF Officer Group Captain Anthony Stainton said he was proud to be part of the celebrations, including the ceremonial cake cutting with an Air Force junior member and Indigenous man Leading Aircraftman Dallas Fisher.

"I am honoured to start my first year as the Senior Australian Defence Force Officer at this base during a year full of milestones," Group Captain Anthony Stainton said.

"Having served at Williamtown previously, I have seen the incredible changes around the base over recent years and to be celebrating eight decades of operational service in Air Force's centenary year makes it even more significant."

Throughout World War II, a number of Empire Air Training Scheme squadrons formed at Williamtown before proceeding overseas in October 1942. After the war, RAAF Base Williamtown began its new life as the Air Force's main fighter base, including squadrons of Gloster Meteor and F-86 Sabre fighter aircraft.

Upgraded to a tactical fighter base in 1983, RAAF Base Williamtown is now home to Air Combat and Surveillance and Response Groups, including the F-35A Lightning II and E-7A Wedgetail aircraft, with more than 3700 military and civilian personnel working on the base, supported by about 500 contractors.

Next milestones in Australia's F-35 program

The first F-35A aircraft has been inducted into BAE Systems Australia's (BAESA) maintenance depot as part of the next major milestone in the Joint Strike Fighter Program.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the F-35A fleet was now 33 strong and ready to deploy on operations.

"This is about protecting and securing Australia's interests but it's also creating jobs and driving investment right here in the Hunter and across the country too," the Prime Minister said.

"This induction demonstrates the world leading capability of our local defence industry here in Australia.

"We want to give as many opportunities to Australian companies as possible which is why there's already more than 50 local companies sharing in \$2.7 billion worth of contracts as part of the F-35 Program.

"As we recover from the COVID recession a key plank of our Economic Recovery Plan is our \$270 billion investment in Defence capability over the next decade and our \$65 billion commitment in air capabilities which includes the Joint Strike Fighter Program. This investment is keeping Australians safe and secure while creating more jobs and more opportunities for businesses."

After being selected as the maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade depot for the Southeast Asia region, the BAESA facility will host Australian F-35A aircraft and in future other nations' F-35 aircraft.

The Program is progressing on budget and on schedule and the aircraft is undergoing routine structural modifications to improve the airframe, ensuring it reaches full life, and align it with newer aircraft.

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds CSC said up to four Australian F-35A aircraft were expected to undergo routine maintenance at BAESA's facility this year, demonstrating the significant boost the Program was having on the local Hunter economy.

"The Morrison Government is unashamedly committed to building a robust sovereign defence industry," Minister Reynolds said.

"We are building our sovereign defence capabilities. We now have 41 fully trained RAAF pilots, nine of whom trained on home soil at RAAF Base Williamtown. We also have more than 225 trained technicians as the RAAF's F-35A maintenance capability continues to develop."

This progress is being supported through the sovereign Training Support Services contract awarded to Lockheed Martin Australia, worth approximately \$70 million. It will see more than 70 personnel employed at RAAF Base Williamtown and RAAF Base Tindal.

"This demonstrates the extraordinary opportunities this program is providing for Australians and the economy, especially as it continues to bounce back from COVID-19," Minister Reynolds said.

Minister for Defence Industry Melissa Price said the program had helped the people of the Hunter region weather the impact of the economic impact of the pandemic.

"In 2020, job losses in the aeronautics industry due to COVID-19 resulted in the closure of Jetstar's aircraft maintenance facility here in Newcastle, and many other regional facilities," Minister Price said.

"BAESA recently hired 25 former Jetstar employees who had been made redundant as a result of the pandemic.

"Not only have these technical workers been retained in the local Hunter aviation industry, but they will also help Defence build its sovereign sustainment capability as the fleet continues to grow."

DEFENCE IN THE HUNTER

Defence conference spotlights industry opportunities

The Hunter Defence Conference is set to return in April after a COVID-enforced hiatus in 2020 and has attracted an array of high-level presenters featuring leaders from government, industry and the Defence forces.

The event will feature keynote speeches by the Minister for Defence Industry, Melissa Price, and the NSW Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, Stuart Ayres, as well as updates from Defence Primes and senior capability development staff from Army, Navy, Air Force, Space and Cyber agencies within Defence.

The 2021 conference, to be held at Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley on April 22-23, will focus on helping SMEs position their business and workforce to take advantage of increasing opportunities in the defence sector, as outlined in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update and Force Structure Plan.

"With the Federal Government having forecast a \$270 billion Defence spend over the next decade and an increased focus on sovereign capability, there has never been better opportunity for local businesses to play a role in the defence sector," Hunter Defence Task Force Chair Tim Owen said.

"The 2021 Hunter Defence Conference will show current and potential contractors where the supply chain opportunities lie and how they can skill their workforce with the capabilities that Defence needs."

The conference will look critically at how the regional industry workforce can be upskilled to meet these increased opportunities. Put simply, a business owner attending can learn what qualifications and capabilities their employees should have to work in the defence industry and where they can source appropriate training.

"Defence is earmarked as a key growth industry in the Hunter and stands to play an important role in diversifying our economy as the region transitions away from its traditional reliance on mining over coming decades," Mr Owen said.

"Hunter companies such as Varley have already demonstrated the opportunities that exist for manufacturers and suppliers that are prepared to adapt their business model to target contracting work in the defence sector."

The Hunter is home to Australia's premier jet fighter base, which has driven the development of a sophisticated aerospace and aviation support network with expertise in advanced manufacturing, state-of-the-art communications and electronics, and smart technologies including high-precision modelling and simulation.

A stronghold of manufacturing and engineering, the Hunter also has a significant capability in shipbuilding, vessel support and the manufacture of land vehicles and components, as well as a reliable track record of major infrastructure delivery. These capabilities are complemented by an experienced and efficient logistical network.

Defence enjoys great support across the Hunter, with industry, government and the community all attuned to the needs of the sector and the benefits of a strong Defence presence in the region. The University of Newcastle, TAFE and high schools share a strong focus on education and training that encourage and support careers in fields pertinent to Defence.

The declaration last year of Williamstown as a Special Activation Precinct will also drive growth in the aerospace and defence sectors. Special Activation Precincts are areas targeted by the State Government for investment funding and support, including fast-tracked planning and approval processes.

The Hunter Defence Conference continues the work the Hunter Defence Task force has been doing to connect regional businesses with defence opportunities.

The Task Force, established in 2018, is a collaborative body comprising a diverse group of industry stakeholders in the region, including manufacturing and supply firms, industry networks, specialist consultants, advisors and government.

Another project the Task Force has in the pipeline is the Defence Readiness Seminar Series, set to be launched this year. The series of workshops is aimed at helping SMEs develop defence capability, whether they are a potential new participant in the industry or already working in the sector.

For more information on the Hunter Defence Conference or to book tickets, visit www.hunterdefence.org.au.

Presenters from the 2019 Hunter Defence Conference.





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2021

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The year's conference themes include skilling and workforce readiness, capability development, investment opportunities for SMEs and driving collaboration in the defence industry. Updates will be given by **The Hon Melissa Price MP**, Minister of Defence Industry, and **The Hon Stuart Ayres MP**, NSW Minister for Jobs, Investment & Tourism (*W. Sydney*).

Spaces are limited due to the current NSW COVID regulations, so get in quick!

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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:
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DEFENCE IN THE HUNTER

Newcastle Airport's bold path to regional prosperity

Newcastle Airport has a clearly stated purpose of being the airport the region deserves. But this is much more than corporate speak. It's a single-minded purpose that drives the airport's objectives, strategy and execution every day.

The airport is proudly regional and takes inspiration from being part of its community. However, the company has ambitious plans to act as a catalyst for economic growth, innovation and investment attraction on a national and international scale.

Whilst 2020 was a year where the aviation industry became considerably smaller, 2021 has opened as one of opportunity and growth. This applies to both the airport's traditional aviation role, as well as its expanding property portfolio.

A key project to increase the connectivity of the Hunter Region and Northern NSW to the rest of the world is to upgrade the RAAF runway to Code E aircraft status. That upgrade, which our region has been strongly advocating for, would see a strengthening and widening of the runway, plus terminal expansion, enabling wide-bodied, long-haul aircraft to use the airfield.

That upgrade will not only take locals to where they want to go, but also bring the rest of the world to the region. Additionally, direct connection by air, opens freight routes, allowing existing industries access to new markets and providing a catalyst for new industrial development in the region.

The land in and around Williamtown, spurred by private and public investment, will inevitably turn the airport into the turbo charged heart of a precinct that will deliver global connectivity, innovation and economic growth. In particular, the development of the Astra Aerolab precinct, which sits adjacent to the Airport and RAAF Base Williamtown, offers a unique opportunity for the airport to further deliver on its promise to the region.

This expansion into the development of a world class aerospace, defence and innovation precinct is a significant diversification of the airport business. The development of Astra will see the creation of a working environment that will attract a globally

significant workforce to the region. This ambition has been bolstered through the recent NSW Government support and the announcement, in May 2020, of a 'Special Activation Precinct' (SAP) at Williamtown.

In making the SAP announcement, Minister Barilaro spoke glowingly about the investment opportunities that would present themselves through development of the site.

"This Special Activation Precinct will help attract more money to regional NSW, create jobs and career opportunities, streamline approval processes and support our region in the wake of COVID-19 and bushfires," he said.

Apart from the NSW Government support on offer, Astra's Williamtown location offers unprecedented airside access to the growing RAAF aircraft fleet, including the F-35A Lightning Strike fighter, the Boeing E-7A Wedgetail and BAE Hawk 127.

Importantly, the Williamtown precinct is already home to key defence industry participants, including prime Defence Contractors, such as Boeing, BAE Systems and Lockheed Martin. To be relevant in this global industry the development will need to be world class and deliver infrastructure and a working environment at a standard not previously experienced in the region.

Stage 1 of the Astra development is now complete, with the NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro, unveiling it on the 8th of December 2020.

"I turned the first sod on this project 18 months ago, and this site has already been transformed to pave the way for a world-leading defence and aerospace precinct," Mr Barilaro said.

"I want to thank Newcastle Airport, the City of Newcastle and Port Stephens Council for their hard work and commitment to making this project a reality."

The CEO of the Newcastle Airport, Dr Peter Cock, is unapologetic about his organisation's grand plans, "Some may see our aspirations for the airport and the region as lofty. On the contrary, we feel it is the very least our region deserves."

Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes, Port Stephens Mayor Ryan Palmer, Deputy Premier John Barilaro and Newcastle Airport Chairman Kirby Clark at the official launch of stage one of Astra Aerolab.



Every aspect of Astra Aerolab is designed to uplift performance. With outstanding integration of technology and lifestyle in an idyllic region, co-located with RAAF Base Williamtown and Newcastle Airport, this is a unique opportunity to join the world's leading defence, aerospace and innovation precinct.



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Newcastle Airport,
RAAF Base Williamtown,
NSW, Australia

A large, thick green arrow graphic that starts from the bottom left and points towards the top right, partially overlapping the text 'UPLIFTING OPPORTUNITY'.

UPLIFTING OPPORTUNITY

DEFENCE IN THE HUNTER

BlueZone Group to manage operation, repair and maintenance of Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Target

BlueZone Group was pleased to welcome representatives from the Australian Defence Force and Saab Australia to their site in February. The relationship between BlueZone Group and Saab has existed for over 20 years and will continue to grow even stronger with BlueZone Group managing operation, repair and maintenance of the AUV62-AT Intermediate Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Target.

The AUV62-AT represents an important new capability for Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) training.

Previously this training has been undertaken using submarines which is an expensive and inefficient use of assets. The AUV62-AT provides a cost-effective and realistic alternative to the use of submarines for training and is an active and passive target and allows real data analysis for planning and post-exercises.

BlueZone Group has a solid reputation for its work with Robotics and Autonomous Systems (RAS) with systems including Double Eagle Remotely Operated Vehicle, Boeing Liquid Robotics Wave Glider and HII Hydroid REMUS. The Hunter based SME was a logical partner to work with Saab on this new system and it is a win-win with Defence supporting another Australian SME.

RAS technology will be leveraged by the Navy as part of the RAS-AI Strategy 2040 to Fight and Win at Sea.

RAS will significantly reduce the risk to our Defence personnel working in potentially dangerous places. ASW will be a key capability in the future Navy fleet with the number of submarines in the Indian Ocean predicted to increase significantly in the next five to ten years.

Saab Australia Senior Project Manager – Maritime, Arran Brown and BlueZone Group CEO, Elizabeth Karpiel, formally sign the contract that will provide for support of the AUV62-AT Intermediate Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Target



New helmet offers innovative vision for defence

A novel project is being developed to propel the Australian Defence Force decades into the future.

The Integrated Digital Helmet System combines digital optics and high-rate data transfer to offer troops the ability to access life-saving information no matter where they are in the field.

Developed in association with University of Newcastle Cognition Lab and more than 30 technology partners around the globe, this project recently received \$2.7 million in Federal Government funding to bring the prototype into a fully-deliverable, manufacture-ready product by 2023–2024.

The helmet acts as an app, bringing in the information crucial to a mission when they need it. "It's technology that people have

thought about for a long time," says Project Director Andrew Jiear. "For example, a soldier could sit inside a vehicle and literally see through the skin of the vehicle as if it were glass."

The helmet offers the ability to track gunshots and track the location of enemies, along with real-time footage to command posts. It can also switch between full colour, night and thermal vision.

This is an extraordinary collaboration opportunity says Professor Janet Nelson, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation at the University of Newcastle. "Our collaborations between industry and government enable us to deliver solutions to problems aligned with Defence priorities to grow Australia's defence export industry."

The University's Cognition Lab is working on perfecting how the information is received as augmented reality to optimise the soldiers' performance while not overloading them.

Spearpoint is a veteran-owned business in Queanbeyan, NSW that specialises in Soldier Systems – in particular personal protective equipment such as helmets, combat body armour and night fighting equipment.



More events planned by HSDN

The Hunter Defence Support Network (HDSN) is a Hunter-based charity formed in 2015 by a group of local business owners and volunteers passionate about promoting positive and productive relations between the Hunter community and the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

HDSN provides a platform through which the Hunter community can better understand, meaningfully connect with, and support, the ADF men and women living in our neighbourhoods through its support and education activities. HDSN works with RAAF Base Williamtown leadership to determine specific ways to best support those who serve our country.

HDSN's education activities raise community knowledge and awareness of the ADF's local base activities and programs, and provide insight into the lives of ADF members, to foster community support and integration. An example is the HDSN Honorary Commander Program. This facilitated program teams up business leaders with Military Commanders, to foster mutually supporting relationships that open visibility to each other's professional challenges and activities.

HDSN's support activities directly aid ADF members posted to the region through monthly programs and seminars led by local professionals sharing relevant expertise, resources, and services. Example seminar topics include Mental Health & Wellbeing, NDIS, Recruitment Opportunities, Starting a Home Business, and Kids Health & Wellbeing.

If you are interested in deepening your knowledge and awareness of the ADF in our community, HDSN invites you to support one of its 2021 events:

3 July - Newcastle Knights game commemorating the 100th Anniversary of RAAF

30 July - Dining Out education corporate dinner

22 October - Lightning Lunch educational corporate lunch

For further information on HDSN visit www.hdsn.org.au

Ampcontrol joins leading utility to launch standalone power systems joint venture

The WA Government has announced a landmark joint venture between Australia's leading energy utility Horizon Power and Hunter-headquartered integrated electrical solutions provider Ampcontrol.

Boundary Power brings together the combined expertise in standalone power system design, construction, deployment, and operation to provide reliable off-grid power solutions to remote and regional communities.

Horizon Power was the first utility in Australia to remove 64 kilometres of poles and wire and replace with standalone power systems (SPS).

SPS uses solar and battery technology to generate and store electricity, providing safer, higher quality and more reliable power, 24 hours a day.

Ampcontrol Managing Director and CEO Rod Henderson said Boundary Power was the next strategic step in leveraging the two business's accumulated and substantial SPS expertise.

"A number of the SPS specialists from Horizon Power and Ampcontrol who have joined the Boundary Power team were behind the success of Horizon Power's deployment of 17 SPS systems on customer properties, east of Esperance," Mr Henderson said.

"We have proven SPS to be a commercially viable renewable power solution that is fully off-grid and tailored to service a broad range of purposes and industries," Mr Henderson said.

To mark today's joint venture, Boundary Power unveiled its new, modular SPS Gen 2.



Boundary Power unveils new SPSGen2 Technology

"The advanced modularity design makes Boundary Power's SPS units easier to transport, quicker to install and more affordable to maintain," Mr Henderson said.

"An SPS Gen 2 can be deployed off the truck and ready for energy export in just 90 minutes, with onsite maintenance, servicing needs and costs reduced thanks to easily swappable module components."

"We are confident Boundary Power's SPS solutions are well suited to meet the growing demand we see in the marketplace, particularly among power utilities looking for a reliable off-grid power alternative."

The McGowan Government's \$10 million investment in deploying Boundary Power SPS across regional WA is scheduled to kick off mid-February, with the first of 45 units installed in Esperance. Four will be installed near Kununurra in the Kimberley, one near Karratha in the Pilbara, seven in the Mid-West region and 33 in the Goldfields-Esperance region.

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Mount Pleasant Optimisation Project

Mach Energy Australia has submitted an Environmental Impact Statement to the NSW Government in support of the Mount Pleasant Optimisation project which would increase output and mine life.

The Optimisation Project proposes extraction of additional coal reserves within Mount Pleasant Operation Mining Leases and an increase in the rate of coal extraction without significantly increasing the total disturbance footprint. The extraction of additional Project coal reserves would be supported by the use and augmentation of existing approved infrastructure.

The Optimisation Project would include:

- mining of additional coal reserves, including lower coal seams in North Pit
- staged increase in extraction, handling and processing of run-of-mine (ROM) coal up to 21 million tonnes per annum as mining moves west, away from Muswellbrook
- increase in average operational workforce to approximately 600 people, with a peak of approximately 830 people
- giving up part of the approved disturbance area to compensate for new disturbance areas
- rail transport of up to approximately 17 million tonnes per annum of product coal to domestic and export customers
- use of innovative mine landform design to provide topographic relief and more natural exterior appearance of waste rock emplacement landforms
- development of new water management and coal reject dewatering infrastructure
- construction and operation of new ancillary infrastructure
- continuation of the Mount Pleasant Operation through to 22 December 2048

Mining export revenue leads Australia's economic recovery

Trade data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that mining has powered Australia's economic recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic with record high export revenue for iron ore, gold and copper in 2020.

Australia's resources exports – including minerals, metals and energy commodities – last year generated \$270 billion in export revenue for the economy and accounted for 62% of total export revenue.

During a very challenging 2020, the Australian minerals industry drove prosperity in Australia, making substantial contributions to investment, exports, wages, jobs and government revenue.

There are 240,000 people directly employed by the resources sector and a total of 1.1 million direct and indirect jobs in the mining and mining equipment, technology and services (METS) sectors.

Mining companies also support thousands of regional businesses around Australia and their workers who provide essential services that keep the industry operating.

In addition to new jobs across the nation and paying its fair share of taxes and royalties, the mining industry also supports local communities through backing local businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic and donations to hospitals, charities, child care centres and schools.

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NSW mining companies inject \$14.9 billion into state economy

The NSW Minerals Council's latest annual member company Expenditure Survey found the 27 participating mining companies directly injected \$14.9 billion into the

NSW economy in 2019-20, while supporting tens of thousands of jobs and generating billions in additional spending across NSW, particularly in regional communities.

"Despite the COVID-19 pandemic that gripped the world last year, mining's contribution to the NSW economy remained strong in 2019-20, with increases in jobs, salaries and the number of local mining supplier businesses in NSW," NSW Minerals Council CEO, Stephen Galilee said.

The \$14.9 billion in spending by mining companies in NSW during the last financial year represents an increase of \$1.2 billion on the previous financial year - a very strong result given the survey period included the first half of 2020 when the impact of COVID-19 was being felt across the economy.

There were almost 27,500 mining jobs supported by Member Companies in 2019-20, an increase of around 1,300 compared to the previous financial year.

The member companies also directly spent \$10.3 billion in NSW during the last financial year on the purchase of goods and services from almost 8,000 local businesses. This is an increase of around 1,000 in the number of local businesses supported by mining from the previous financial year.

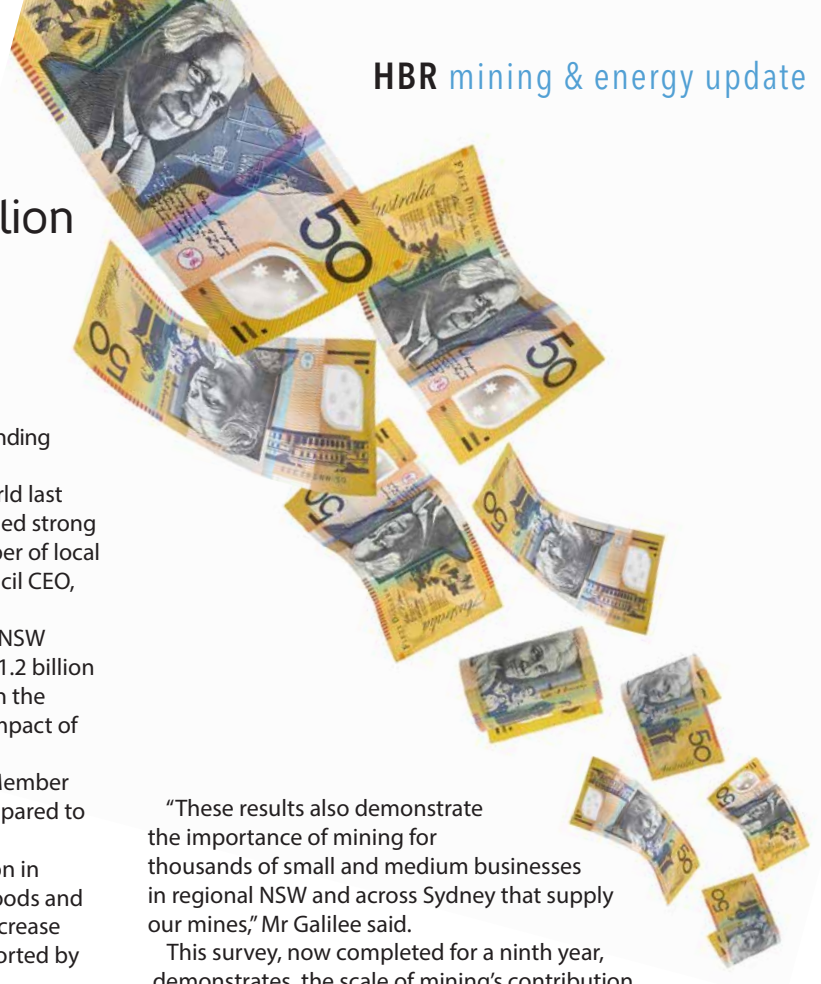
Surveyed companies also spent \$94 million in community contributions and payments to local governments and contributed \$1.8 billion in taxes to the NSW Government, including royalties.

"The overall improvement in mining jobs during the last financial year highlights the resilience of our industry during tough times and the importance of keeping mines operating while maintaining safety of miners, their families and mining communities across NSW."

"These results also demonstrate the importance of mining for thousands of small and medium businesses in regional NSW and across Sydney that supply our mines," Mr Galilee said.

This survey, now completed for a ninth year, demonstrates the scale of mining's contribution and the importance of mining to the broader NSW economy.

"These survey results confirm that much of regional NSW continues to depend on mining projects for local jobs, investment and economic growth. If mining is to continue to deliver these direct economic benefits to NSW and help with the post COVID-19 recovery, we need the right policy settings to support our miners, their families and our mining communities over the long term."



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Unique Deed cements partnership between Singleton Council and mining companies

In what is thought to be a unique approach, the management of millions of dollars for the social and economic benefit of the future of Singleton has been formalised with the signing of the Community Economic Development Fund Deed.

Signatories Singleton Council, Glencore and The Bloomfield Group will oversee the use of the proceeds from the Community Economic Development Fund, which was developed last year with a portion of the proceeds from Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs).

The objectives of the Fund are to help proactively manage the impacts of mining through projects, activities and events to increase economic growth and productivity, foster innovation, support and grow jobs, increase business profitability, improve living standards, reduce social issues and promote health and wellbeing for the communities of the Singleton LGA.

Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore said it was a unique collaboration between Council and mining companies to sure up the future of Singleton by setting aside some of the proceeds from mining projects now.

"Best of all, the Deed commits the signatories to working together to oversee how these funds will be best used to benefit the community," she said.

"It's an extra layer of transparency and a demonstration to the community that the best interests of the people of Singleton – both now and those who will come after us – are truly at the heart of the Community Economic Development Fund.

"The objectives of the fund are very clearly set out to support the socio-economic future of Singleton where businesses, community groups and individuals can thrive in an environment that supports their prosperity and wellbeing."

In line with the structure of the Deed, Council's first ordinary meeting of the year tonight will decide Council's three representatives on the Joint Management Board who, along with senior staff of Glencore and The Bloomfield Group, who will consider and provide recommendations to Council on proposals for consideration for funding under the Fund.

It is envisaged the Joint Management Board will meet for the first time next month, and at least once a year thereafter.

"With such a strong connection to the Singleton LGA, we are pleased to be a major contributor to the Singleton Community Economic Development Fund," Glencore Coal Assets Australia Chief Operating Officer, Ian Cribb said.

"We look forward to working with Council and other fund partners to deliver community outcomes."

The Bloomfield Group Chief Development Officer Geoff Moore said the local company looked forward to continuing to work with Council and the community and welcomed the opportunity to review projects that will directly benefit local people.

"Through this unified approach, funding can be applied across a wide range of projects that are consistent with the funding criteria to provide a benefit to the local community and support the social and economic future of Singleton," he said.

Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore said she looked forward to seeing outcomes from the Community Economic Development Fund deliver tangible benefits for the community.

"With ongoing discussions about the future of mining, the emergence of new industries and high community expectations for career and lifestyle opportunities, the Community Economic Development Fund allows Council and mining companies to work proactively to provide the resources to support Singleton's prosperity for the long-term," she said.

Community survey now open

Local Newcastle communities can influence strategy, share their views and inspire others through the Local Voices Community Survey, conducted by Port Waratah Coal Services.

Open until the end of March, the Survey is a six-monthly check-in with the community and stakeholders. There are a number of topics, including environmental aspects such as air quality and noise, economic benefit, our community investment programme and diversity and inclusion in our workforce. It takes only 5-10 minutes to complete.

The CEO of Port Waratah, Hennie du Plooy, said the Local Voices Community Survey has been a significant part of the organisation's community engagement strategy since 2018.

"The regular Local Voices surveys have opened up an important dialogue with our local communities and key stakeholders, which has led to several improvements for our business and stronger relationships based on shared information and respect," said Mr du Plooy.

"We value the opinions of people living in our neighbouring portside suburbs and the wider Newcastle region.

"The Survey helps us to make more informed decisions and over time allows us to track trends in community views to see where we are improving and where there is a need to focus our efforts."

Survey results have influenced greater investment in health as a priority area for our Community Investment Partnership Programme, with Port Waratah investing more than \$270,000 in health projects over the last two years. The development of the Youth Sport in Portside Suburbs programme was in response to feedback through the survey, providing more than \$20,000 for junior sporting clubs last year. We've also provided greater access to independent air quality information and attuned our range of communication methods to meet the preferences of the community and other stakeholders, encouraging two-way communication through traditional and digital platforms.

Beyond this funding, for every survey that is completed five dollars is donated to a local community organization – almost \$10,000 since 2018.

"The Survey provides valuable insights for our business and as an active and committed member of our local community, it's important that we listen," said Mr du Plooy.

For more information and to register and complete the Local Voices Community Survey, visit www.pwcs.com.au/survey



National strategy to boost resources workforce

The release of the Commonwealth Government's Australia's National Resources Workforce Strategy will increase awareness across the nation about the diverse and rewarding opportunities available in Australia's minerals and resources workforce.

Making more people job-ready for a rewarding career in Australian mining means making more relevant and contemporary information available about career options along with access to qualifications delivered by training providers who can help meet changing industry and worker expectations.

The strategy highlights the Australian Government's commitment to education reform, skills packages and job support which will help all Australians pursue careers in the resources sector, including through the Mining Skills Organisation Pilot.

The MSOP is already implementing initiatives in digital transformation, apprenticeships and attraction and retention project hubs while conducting a qualifications design reform trial to help more workers get faster access to qualifications for employment in Australia's world-leading minerals industry.

The MSOP is being delivered by the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and partners across the mining industry with support from the Australian Government.

Through the MSOP's involvement in the trial, the Australian mining industry will ensure activities better meet industry needs and provide confidence to industry that there is a pipeline of appropriately-skilled people to fill the jobs created by mining to support Australia's economic recovery.

An efficient, contemporary and focused vocational education and training sector is critical to supporting further job creation by Australia's minerals sector.

With more than one-third of the 240,000-strong mining workforce holding a Certificate III or IV qualification, improving qualification reform models is crucial for the industry.

Putting Team Australia on the global critical minerals map

The Minerals Council of Australia says that better planning and seed funding for critical minerals processing will fast-track opportunities to reap the economic and strategic dividend of downstream value-adding.

The Australian Government's Resources Technology and Critical Minerals Processing road map and grants program recognises the potential for Australia to share more of the extraordinary value of critical minerals in a rapidly changing global economic, technological and strategic environment. Australia's future success in critical minerals – as with other minerals – will be based on quality resources, homegrown expertise and our nation's reputation as a reliable secure and sustainable supplier.

Putting Team Australia on the global critical minerals map will help attract the investment and technology necessary to meet the growing needs of global supply chains for critical and other minerals for high value products like batteries, solar cells and other innovative and early-stage technologies.

The Australian resources sector has also been an incubator of globally competitive industrial and technological innovations that have enabled tens of thousands of Australian businesses to grow and trade a diverse range of goods and services domestically and internationally.

Most of the 1.1 million jobs directly and indirectly supported by mining and the minerals equipment, technology and services sector are in a diverse array of businesses that have harnessed the skills and technologies in manufacturing, defence industries, automation, robotics, artificial intelligence, data analysis and communications. The success of the METS sector proves that manufacturing in Australia can and should be efficient, commercially competitive and technologically advanced.

The METS sector should be fully integrated into manufacturing industry policy, programs and related plans and funding for manufacturing technology and innovation. The government should also continue support for bodies that enhance collaboration between the mining and METS sector and research organisations.

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During a recent password audit by a company, it was found that an employee was using the following password: "MickeyMinniePlutoHueyLouieDeweyDonaldGoofyCanberra"

When asked why they had such a long password, they rolled their eyes and said: "Hello! It has to be at least 8 characters and include at least one capital."

"Doc, you gotta check my leg. Something's wrong. Just put your ear up to my thigh and you'll hear it!" exclaimed the patient.

The doctor cautiously placed his ear to the man's thigh only to hear, "Gimme 20 bucks, I really need 20 bucks."

"I've never seen or heard anything like this before, how long has this been going on?" the doctor asked.

"That's nothing Doc, put your ear to my knee."

The doctor put his ear to the man's knee and heard it say "Man, I really need 10 bucks, just lend me 10 bucks!!"

"Sir, I really don't know what to tell you, I've never seen anything like this." The doctor was dumbfounded.

"Wait Doc, that's not it. There's more, just put your ear up to my ankle," the man urged him.

The doctor did as the man said and was blown away to hear his ankle plead, "Please, I just need 5 bucks. Lend me 5 bucks please if you can."

I have no idea what to tell you," the doctor said. "There's nothing about it in my books," he said as he frantically searched all his medical reference books.

"I can make a well educated guess though. Based on life and all my previous experience I can tell you that your leg appears to be broke in three places."

The world's leading expert on European wasps walks into a record shop.

He asks the assistant "Do you have 'European Vespidae Acoustics

Volume 2? I believe it was released this week."

"Certainly," replies the assistant. "Would you like to listen before you buy it?"

"That would be wonderful," says the expert, and puts on a pair of headphones.

He listens for a few moments and says to the assistant, "I'm terribly sorry, but I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and this is not accurate at all. I don't recognise any of those sounds. Are you sure this is the correct record?"

The assistant checks the turntable and replies that it is indeed European Vespidae Acoustics Volume 2. The assistant apologises and lifts the needle onto the next track.

Again the expert listens for a few moments and then says to the assistant, "This is outrageous false advertising! I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and no European wasp has ever made a sound like the ones on this record!"

The manager of the shop overhears the commotion and walks over.

"What seems to be the problem, sir?"

"This is an outrage! I am the world's leading expert on European wasps. Nobody knows more about them than I do. There is no way in hell that the sounds on that record were made by European wasps!"

The manager glances down and notices the problem instantly.

"I'm terribly sorry, sir. It appears we've been playing you the bee side."

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Leadership is about giving people a platform for spreading ideas that work." - Seth Godin

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Honeysuckle Park artist impression



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*Honeysuckle
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