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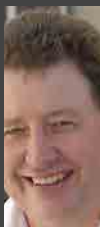
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GARRY



SANDIE



MEGAN



JUDY



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 UNLEASHING POTENTIAL

With the next Federal Budget to be handed down in May, it will be extremely interesting to discover what changes the Government will make to reduce the budgetary deficit and to encourage growth of the Australian economy.

With a number of measures from the 2014 Budget now in tatters, the position is now considerably worse than forecast.

Of course the current budget deficit was many years in the making. The contributors to the current position included a lack of forward planning during the mining boom and unsustainable handouts.

Whilst short term actions will help reduce the deficit, the best solution to repairing the budget requires some longer term planning including taxation reform, productivity increases and supporting economic growth generally across the nation.

Unfortunately we have a political history that lacks proper long term planning, often preferring to concentrate on short term, politically-driven band aid solutions.

The lack of vision from both sides of politics is failing the Australian economy and preventing the nation from achieving its full potential.

Look around the world and look at the success stories in sustainable economic growth. You will find a vision and a strategy that optimises the positioning of resources and creates the certainty that is required to attract long term investment.

The country is crying out for a 5/10/20 year vision that will help grow the economy and make it more resilient against external factors.

Politically there are several advantages. To begin with, the electorate would have a better idea of what the Government stands for and how they would like to see the country progress. At the moment most people don't really understand what the major parties stand for or what their points of differentiation are – bad marketing! The presence of a positive plan would certainly be a breath of fresh air. Also if the electorate understands the bigger picture reasons for policy decisions, they will be more supportive. Much of the electorate is actually willing to take some medicine if they can see the reasons and benefits for it.

As mentioned, the May Budget will be a critical step in addressing the budgetary deficit. It is hoped that it will not just contain short term measures but introduce reforms and longer term measures that will help strengthen the economy for years to come.

Garry Hardie
Publisher & Editor

GARRY HARDIE PUBLISHER & EDITOR



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Stage 1 Newcastle Airport expansion

Newcastle Airport's \$14.5 million terminal expansion project reached a milestone on February 24 with Stage 1 being completed. Minister for Planning and Environment and Minister for Women, Pru Goward marked the occasion with a ceremonial cutting of the ribbon. It's the beginning of a new phase for Newcastle, opening opportunities for future routes to Adelaide, Perth, and Cairns as well as international services to New Zealand and South East Asia. The expansion will also provide local jobs and new possibilities for the region.

Stage 1 was completed on schedule and comprises a 2,600 sqm extension to the existing terminal building, a new arrivals hall, and a dedicated area for permanent customs, immigration, and quarantine facilities, in readiness for potential future international services. With this stage completed Newcastle Airport is now able to discuss future direct international services to and from Newcastle without infrastructure being a barrier.

Stage 2 of the redevelopment has commenced and involves a full refurbishment of the existing terminal which will become dedicated to check-in and an expansive departure lounge.



Airport opening



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Easier international travel out of Newcastle Airport

Newcastle Airport and Singapore Airlines have launched a campaign challenging Hunter residents to 'rethink' how they fly internationally.

Titled "Rethink your flights. International travel. Domestic convenience" the campaign aims to educate Hunter residents on how easy it is to depart for their international flight from Newcastle Airport.

The campaign highlights the ability of Hunter passengers to book their international travel directly with Singapore Airlines, check-in for their international travel at Newcastle Airport the same as they would as for travelling domestically, fly on Virgin Australia to Brisbane or Melbourne, and then easily transit through to connect to the international Singapore Airlines leg of their flight. The passenger's bags are checked all the way through to their final international destination.

Newcastle Airport's Manager Aviation Business Development, David Nye, commented that this campaign was developed to highlight the benefit of quick transit time at Brisbane and Melbourne to connect with the international services.

"Our research indicates that, where possible, our catchment prefers to fly from Newcastle Airport. This campaign clearly shows the ability to depart for international flights from Newcastle without needing to spend wasted hours in transit.

"Most of the connection and transit times in Melbourne and Brisbane flying with Singapore Airlines are less than two hours, the perfect amount of time to clear border controls. This means for our catchment it is faster to depart for international travel from Newcastle Airport and enjoy the convenience that comes with leaving from home," said David.

Stage 1 of Newcastle Airport's redevelopment opened in February 2015 and includes permanent international passenger processing facilities. "It is one of our main strategic objectives to offer direct international services to and from Newcastle Airport, and we are still working with a number of airlines to secure direct services. In the meantime, this initiative of Singapore Airways, the most awarded airline in the world, is most certainly a convenient option for Hunter residents travelling internationally," concluded David.

Flight bookings with Singapore Airlines departing Newcastle Airport can be made at www.singaporeair.com/ntl

Seniors living opportunity on offer at Huntlee

Huntlee is the first new town to be built in the Hunter in more than 50 years. On completion, it will be home to around 20,000 people. The township's 7500 homes will be spread across four villages surrounding a 200ha bustling town centre.

With off-the-plan residential land sales about to hit 200 and Coles already committed to a full-scale supermarket and associated retail stores, the town of Huntlee is taking shape. The next commercial offer to the market is a major Seniors Living Development site which will be for sale by Expressions of Interest.

Commenting on the opportunity, Huntlee Sales Director, Adam Lotherington said a significant parcel of land had been earmarked for the site and the Huntlee team is eager to see what ideas potential partners have for the concept.

"We're offering up to ten hectares of land adjacent to the \$10m Town Park and just a short stroll from the town centre," said Adam.

"Zoned B4 Mixed Use, all utility services will be made available to the level site and the shape of the final parcel of land is open to negotiation based on the requirements of the purchaser.

"First class, resort-style Seniors Living facilities are coming online across the country in response to the demands of an ageing population. They cater for the over 50 market who are looking to down-size and simplify their lifestyle, reduce the demands of maintaining a large family home and pursue more leisure activities.

"These usually gated communities are the ideal solution, they provide affordable, quality living options, outstanding communal facilities, a wide range of services in close proximity and all in an area populated by like-minded residents at a similar stage in their lives.

"The parcel of land we have earmarked at Huntlee opens up an extensive range of options to deliver a Seniors Living lifestyle offering of a standard not currently available in this area and all on the doorstep of the world famous Hunter Valley Wine Country.

"The location is sure to appeal to current residents of the area and tree-changers alike looking for an all-new, fully serviced, Seniors Living resort with a wide range of home options. We are excited to offer the market this opportunity to create a unique over 50s community which will grow alongside the vibrant, 21st Century community that is Huntlee," concluded Adam.

Expressions of Interest close on 31 March 2015 and should be directed to Adam Lotherington, phone 0417 960 583 or email alotherington@lwpproperty.com.au

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National award for Hunter production company

A series of educational videos to help reduce fatalities on NSW roads has taken out a national award for local production company Good Eye Deer.

The compelling and traumatic video series that explores the consequences and human costs of the choices made when driving won Best Education and Training Video at the 2014 National Australian Video Producers Association (AVPA) Awards in February. The series also won the Gold Award for cinematography from the Australian Cinematographers Society in the Corporate and Education category at the 2014 NSW and ACT awards.

The seven-part series, *Your Keys, Your Choice, Your Consequences* was produced by Good Eye Deer as part of the Traffic Offenders Intervention Program (TOIP) run by Police Citizens Youth Clubs NSW (PCYC).

Good Eye Deer Creative Director Gavin Banks said the result was a successful collaboration between about 10 organisations and many more individuals who believed in the power of education.

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Masters study for Hunter United's scholarship winner

Hunter United employee Kirsty Maher was awarded one of four 'Emerging Leader Tertiary/Vocational Education Scholarships' at the World Credit Union Conference in 2014. The national award recognises emerging leaders within the mutual banking sector and provides a \$3,000 scholarship to assist with the cost of undertaking a vocational or tertiary qualification course.

Kirsty will commence a Masters of Business Administration through Deakin University in March. She says she chose Deakin because they offer high quality online courses which will allow her to continue working while studying. "I will be able to put my new skills into practice immediately, adding value to Hunter United, ultimately benefiting our members" said Kirsty who has been with Hunter United for nine years as part of the Finance team.

Hunter United's CEO, Steve Martinelli said "The award recognises the skills, expertise and experience of our staff and is recognition of the quality of Kirsty's work. The Board and the Hunter United team are proud of Kirsty and support her in her on-going educational qualifications". The award is sponsored by CGU and presented in partnership with AM Institute.

Kirsty Maher – Hunter United

TAFE assists independent learners enter Uni

For Jedidiah Curry the Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC) was his ticket to a double degree at University. Hunter TAFE's TPC gives students who may not otherwise finish school a fresh chance at success and entering university.

Four Hunter TAFE TPC Students took learning into their own hands and have been accepted into bachelor degrees in Law, Social Science, Psychology, Science and Criminal Justice. Jedidiah Curry is just one of those students and this year started at the University of Newcastle.

Thanks to Jed's persistence, tenacity and commitment to independent learning he was successfully accepted into a double degree at the University of Newcastle, combining a Bachelor of Laws with a Bachelor of Social Science.

Hunter TAFE teacher, Karen Christie said that the TPC course is often the best option for those where school, for one way or another didn't work out, but have the potential to achieve great success in their own way.

Hunter TAFE offers the Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation (TPC) with an emphasis on skill-based learning as well as discipline-specific content. It is a recognised tertiary entry qualification by the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC), NSW universities and some interstate universities.



Jed Curry with Hunter TAFE TPC Teacher, Karen Christie.

Big changes to key environmental legislation and policy



GHD will be holding a free technical seminar in Newcastle discussing:

- **What is replacing the carbon tax** - how can you benefit under the new Emissions Reduction Fund?
- What does the new **NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy** mean for major project approvals?
- How do conceptual site model changes to the **National Environment Protection (Assessment of Contamination) Measure 1999** impact on your projects?

Are you impacted?

Register your interest to
Michael Ulph
Market Leader – Environment
E michael.ulph@ghd.com

www.ghd.com

Phil Cox leaves Hunter TAFE

Phil Cox had his last day as CEO/Institute Director at Hunter TAFE on 13 February.

Mr Cox said that Hunter TAFE was well positioned to continue its role as one of Australia's leading regional providers of vocational education and training (VET).

"Hunter TAFE is well positioned and thoroughly prepared for entry into the new competitive VET market. The Institute was subsequently successful in winning a significant contract (one of the largest in NSW) under the new Smart and Skilled competitive funding arrangements for 2015.

"Hunter TAFE is where I had planned it to be and there is an excellent executive team in place, therefore now is the right time for me to seek other challenges and do something different," he said.

"I have been honoured to be part of such an amazing organisation," he said.

"I have been constantly amazed by the way Hunter TAFE people continually look to innovate and adapt how we meet the ever changing training and education needs of individuals, industries and our communities.

"I believe that what Hunter TAFE does, significantly contributes to the social and economic development of the Hunter and Central Coast regions and beyond," he said.

Newcastle Airport - Canberra flights to recommence

Direct services between Newcastle and Canberra are to recommence from 27 April.

The service is to be operated by Pelican Airlines under the Fly Pelican brand on a 19-seat pressurised BAE Jetstream 32 aircraft. The airline plans to operate double-daily services Monday to Friday and a Sunday afternoon service.

"This announcement is excellent news. Hunter businesses have been demanding the return of direct services between Newcastle and Canberra since the end of 2013 when Brindabella Airlines went into administration."

Newcastle Airport management has been working behind the scenes to secure a new operator on the route and is delighted to see Fly Pelican reinstate this service," said David Nye, Newcastle Airport's Manager Aviation Business Development.

Fly Pelican will have aircraft based at Newcastle Airport allowing for an early departure to Canberra and late arrival back into Newcastle to facilitate a full business day in the nation's capital.

The CEO of Fly Pelican, Paul Graham, said "The Newcastle-Canberra route has been without an air service for more than 16 months.

"Fly Pelican is extremely pleased to be providing this important service to Hunter travellers. It's a service that has a proven history, and we are confident that from day one it will be well supported by Hunter business and will prosper"

In addition to the Newcastle-Canberra service, the airline will also operate services from Newcastle to Sydney with onward connections to Mudgee.

HVTC CEO appointed to national industry board

Australia's oldest group training organisation will have a stronger voice about the future of apprenticeships and traineeships with the appointment of Hunter Valley Training Company CEO Sharon Smith to the Group Training Australia Limited Board.

Group Training Australia (GTA) is the national association representing a network of around 150 Group Training Organisations (GTOs) located throughout metropolitan, regional and remote areas of Australia. Collectively, GTOs employ around 35,000 apprentices and trainees with more than 100,000 businesses using a group training organisation to manage the employment of their apprentices and trainees.

Ms Smith's appointment provides an exciting opportunity to be at the frontline of group training direction and policy. Her new role is timely given major industry reforms including the federal government's introduction of the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) from July this year.



Sharon Smith HVTC



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HVTC collaboration provides training for welding industry

A Centre of Excellence is being established near Maitland under a new training delivery partnership between HVTC and the Welding Technology Institute of Australia (WTIA).

WTIA provides higher qualification training to Australia's welding industry currently servicing 300 company members and 1200 personal members. International Institute of Welding (IIW) training courses offered by WTIA are recognised in 57 IIW member countries.

HVTC CEO Sharon Smith says the new Skills Centre is ideally located to support the innovative collaboration which will create additional training opportunities particularly for heavy industries located around Maitland, Muswellbrook and Singleton.

"HVTC is thrilled to partner with WTIA and provide specialised workshops that can deliver such high level training programs that will enable welders and companies to become nationally and internationally recognised," Ms Smith said.

WTIA has a long history of conducting IIW programmes for welding, inspection and related personnel qualification and certification, along with manufacturer certification. Such training

is then joined with local qualifications and certifications.

WTIA CEO Geoff Crittenden says the Rutherford Skills Centre is a valuable regional asset and believes tradespeople and firms will greatly benefit from the new alliance.

"Our new partnership with HVTC will allow experienced welders to achieve higher qualifications which in turn will help employers across the Hunter's engineering and manufacturing sectors."

"Australian quality standards are exceptionally high. Attaining further international qualifications improves overall quality management and helps local industry fight off competition from overseas," Mr Crittenden said.

From mid-March, WTIA will begin delivering courses from its new Centre of Excellence including the five-day International Welding Inspector Basic level course. Registrations are currently open.

As specialists in apprenticeship training, HVTC will be working closely with WTIA to further develop opportunities that will assist in bridging the gap from traditional trades training to qualifications and certifications for higher level welding coordination and welding inspection.

Premier officially opens largest regional conference centre in NSW

The honourable Mike Baird, Premier of New South Wales, officially unveiled the new \$6 million, 1650-delegate capacity Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley Conference and Events Centre on 9 February.

Robert Coates, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley said "The new Conference and Events Centre will position the Hunter Valley as a leading Australian conference and events destination. Offering guests the latest technology and a light-filled design in a state-of-the-art venue with a combined 2,000 square metres of pre-function, meeting and exhibition space

coupled with a unique wine country destination. We have already received large scale group bookings for 2015 resulting in 20% growth in business events and many in the pipeline for 2016 - it looks set to be a very busy year for us."

Mr. Baird said that the convention centre highlights the potential in the area and helps to bring out the beauty of the Hunter Valley.

The Centre has been developed by the Schwartz Family Company (SFC) and provides the largest and most comprehensive regional conference and exhibition facility in New South Wales. Schwartz Family Company director Dr. Jerry Schwartz said that the newest addition to Crowne Plaza is a part of his dream to turn a "cocoon into a butterfly". Dr Schwartz continued to say that the convention centre will position the Hunter Valley as one of the key regional event destinations, competing with all major cities across Australia and New Zealand.

The Centre will diversify the region's current business events mix by drawing in larger event markets and industries into the region.

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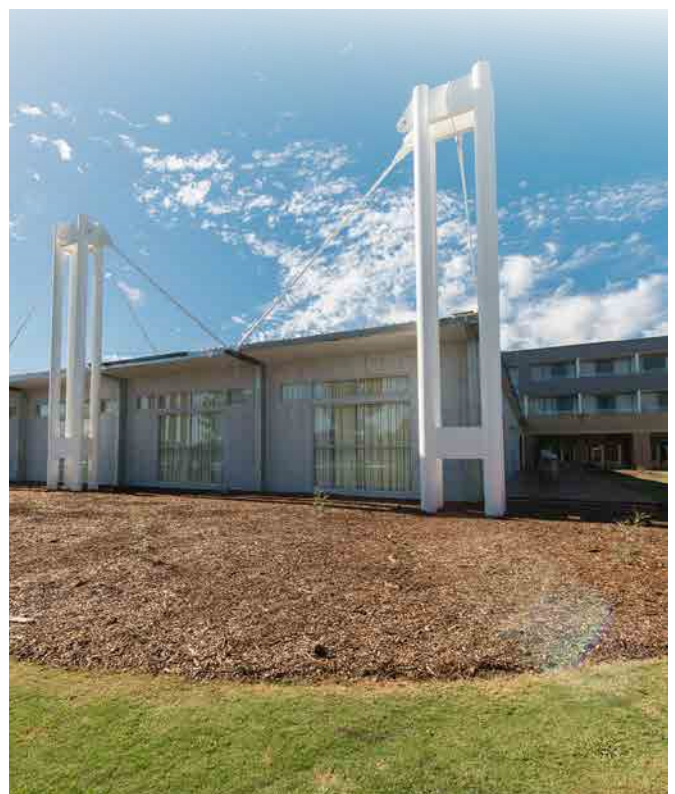
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Opalescent Group expands

The Opalescent Group has expanded with the acquisition of Display Power Group Pty Ltd, a Central Coast based business offering a range of design and display solutions.

With a rich local history of more than 60 years, the Opalescent Group also includes the original member, Opalescent Signs, which is based in Islington and the nearby Created Impact, which was acquired in 1998.

The Group offers display solutions from the smallest to the largest and is able to provide all the services from initial design all the way through to installation. The facilities include a comprehensive manufacturing facility at Islington that is supplying to projects in every state.

The Group has gained a strong national reputation and is only one of five display companies in Australia that is certified to supply Woolworths.

Other well-known brand customers BWS, Big W, Coles, InterContinental Hotel, Holiday Inn Hotel, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Parkroyal Hotel, Bunnings and Westpac.

Some of the more interesting recent projects have included:

- **Ibis Hotel Adelaide** - This project included both high and low level signage installations. Due to the location on the building and access restrictions, one of the high elevations required installation via abseil, and the other high elevation required a saddle frame structure allowing us to fix the frame over the building parapet. In addition the low level signage required installation over the window mullions and fixing to the glass. To achieve this they had to cut sections out of the back of the fabricated letters to allow room for the mullions as well as using specialised glass treatments and adhesives to direct fix to the windows.

- **Kurri TAFE – Plant & Heavy Vehicle Training Centre** - This project required the utilisation of various recycled mechanical pieces that had been collected on site at the plant and heavy vehicle training centre. Recycled mechanical wheel axles were used to form the base of the directional pylon signs. This was achieved by welding additional base plates and framing structure to the axles, stabilising it to support the signage frames. In addition various recycled gear cogs were used to replace the letter O on signage to the different department blocks.

- **Hayman Island (design)** - Prior to the rebrand and reopening of the resort the Opalescent Group was involved in the signage design work, helping the client finalise the signage proposal for the site. Throughout this process the Group investigated and suggested many less typical materials and applications including extensive use of timber and sandstone to achieve a high-end finish.

Although the Opalescent Group is achieving significant success, it has a policy of looking forward to offer innovative and unique solutions to the market. It is currently working on a number of significant developments and has a growing reputation for providing original solutions for projects both in the Hunter and across Australia.



High and low level signage at the Ibis Hotel Adelaide

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2015 Hunter Investment Prospectus officially launched

Published by Hunter Business Publications in conjunction with RDA-Hunter, the Hunter Investment Prospectus, which is endorsed by all levels of government, plays a significant part in communicating the Hunter's key strengths as a business

location and helps drive investment for our future.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP represented Deputy Prime Minister The Hon Warren Truss MP when he officially launched the 2015 edition of the business focused publication at the new International Arrivals Terminal, at Newcastle Airport on 6 March.

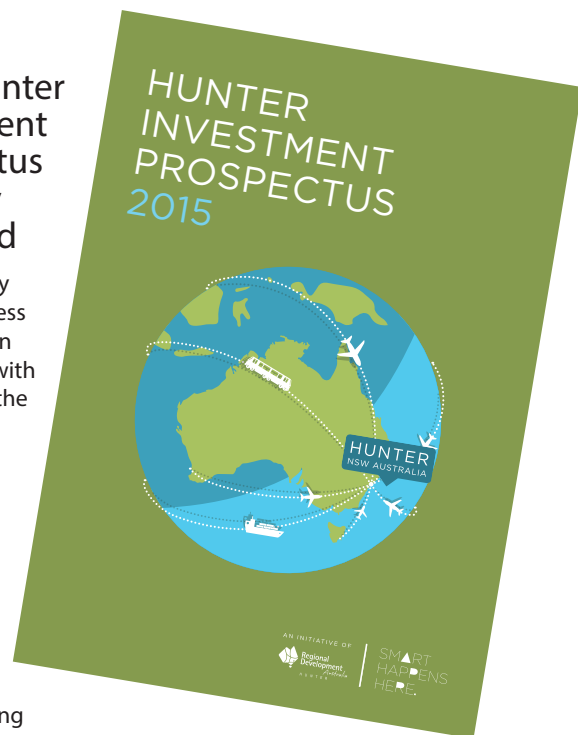
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development The Hon Warren Truss MP in his endorsement of the 2015 Hunter Investment Prospectus said that the publication sent a clear message nationally and internationally that the Hunter is open for business.

RDA Hunter CEO Todd Williams said, "Attracting investment is a key strategy for RDA Hunter as we work to increase economic activity and create new jobs by strengthening the region's human capital, productivity, infrastructure, access to markets, regional comparative advantage and business competitiveness,

"Our investment strategy aims to grow capability for the region's future with initiatives like our ME Program as well as attracting investment from outside the region, including internationally.

"The Hunter Investment Prospectus helps us raise awareness of the Hunter and is distributed to 105 international destinations via AusTrade and NSW Trade and Investment."

The 2015 Hunter Investment Prospectus is available as a 100 page hard copy book or in digital format from www.rdahunter.org.au/hunter-region/hunter-investment-prospectus



RDA-Hunter CEO Todd Williams, Hunter Business Publications Managing Director Garry Hardie, RDA-Hunter Board Member Susan Ivens, RDA-Hunter Chairman Michael Slater, The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP, RDA-Hunter Board Member Paul Hughes and RDA-Hunter Deputy Chair John Turner

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Hard work pays-off for Hunter TAFE community

Extensive work over the past three years has paid off for Hunter TAFE.

Hunter TAFE CEO, Christine Warrington, said that significant work to prepare for the changes brought about by the NSW Smart & Skilled Reforms had paid-off.

'We are confident that the execution of our Strategic Plan including the organisations brand repositioning and major structural and system changes has prepared the business for the ongoing and changing needs of our region,' Ms Warrington said.

At the launch of Hunter TAFE's 2014 Community & Industry Report Ms Warrington outlined the organisation's achievements over the past 12 months to an audience of more than 80 business and community leaders from the Hunter and Central Coast.

"Hunter TAFE was awarded one of the largest contracts in NSW under the Smart & Skilled reform."

Ms Warrington said that the contract was underpinned by the support of the Central Coast and Hunter Regions.

"Delivering quality education is at the centre of our business. A major focus for Hunter TAFE is developing better ways to connect and increase collaboration with business and industry communities to meet the modern needs of our customers."

"As a result, the 2014 National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) Student Outcomes Report showed 95.7% of customers would recommend us to others, more than 5.5% above the industry average," said Ms Warrington.

"We continued to work closely with industry partners to ensure we can deliver job-ready skills. This collaboration has enabled us to offer courses that include practical placements, greater flexibility and utilise the latest technology," she said.

"Our people are among the world's best and remain our most valued asset with staff and students achieving excellence across all career areas. In 2014 they were recognised with more than 50 awards including the prestigious WorldSkills Evatt Shield as the best performing region in Australia," she said.

Ms Warrington also told guests that early indications were that 2015 enrolments were strong and as expected. With increased interest in areas such as aged care and disability, nursing, community services, mining, automotive, children services, commercial cookery and construction.

"2014 was a year of challenge and change, but as Australia's

largest regional Vocational Education and Training provider we are well positioned to provide the highest quality, employment ready programs and courses to meet the best interests of those with whom we connect," Ms Warrington said.

Green shoots emerging in local economy

With the dramatic drop in unleaded petrol prices and a low Australian dollar, the Hunter Research Foundation's latest Hunter Region Economic Indicators report unearths the green shoots emerging from a challenging local economy.

Hunter Research Principal Economist Dr Alan Rai released the results of the report at a breakfast in Newcastle on 13 February. He says the national economy is continuing to re-balance, while positive developments begin to sprout in the Region's economy.

"In a good sign for exporters, the fall of the Australian dollar by 15% is making our exports more price-competitive. Additionally, it lowers the cost of travel to Australia compared to travelling outside Australia," Alan said.

"This likely means a boost for the Hunter's visitor industry, which already makes a substantial contribution (over \$2 billion was injected into the Hunter economy in 2013/14) to the Region."

As a net importer of oil, the recent drop in fuel prices is another positive for the Region. Lower petrol prices represent savings to Hunter consumers and businesses.

Record low interest rates are another green shoot for the region, boosting residential construction.

More sobering figures come from the unemployment rate in the Hunter. Although the overall rate appears to have stabilised, at 8%, the rate for those under 24 years old is more than double that, at 18%.

"Much more needs to be done, especially for the Hunter's young people, to ensure the Region remains vibrant, globally-competitive and socially resilient," said Dr Rai.

New premises for MGA

After solid growth in recent years, the local branch of MGA Insurance Brokers has moved from Booleroo to larger and more modern premises in Charlestown.

MGA Insurance Brokers is one of the top 10 insurance brokerages in Australia with 28 offices and 200 personnel and is currently celebrating its 40th anniversary of operations.

The new local office is located at 49 Ridley Street, Charlestown.

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AV Chartered Accountants relocate

After almost 20 years in the same location, AV Chartered Accountants is on the move. Founding Director Tony Vidray has spent most of his professional life in Newcastle's CBD and has now found ideal premises for a relocation. "After I left school I worked for a small firm in Darby Street. Within two years we merged with a larger national office and moved to Hunter Street in the CBD. That was 31 years ago and I've been working there ever since."

With all the positive activity in the city, they decided to sell their current premises and after careful consideration of a number of offices for lease chose one of just three buildings in Newcastle with fibre optic connectivity.

"The premises on Griffiths Road Lambton boast the fastest internet in the city and we can't wait. We look forward to welcoming clients into our new offices unit 9, 57 Crescent Rd, Waratah on Monday March 9 when we complete our move."



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Lockheed Martin facility opened at Williamtown

Minister for Defence Kevin Andrews MP formally opened Lockheed Martin Australia's new facilities at the Williamtown Aerospace Centre on 16 February.

The new facility provides a consolidated centre for Lockheed Martin's operations in the Hunter Region, with space to expand, for up to 70 engineering and IT specialists supporting the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) surveillance programs; such as the Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN) and the Tactical Air Defence Radar System (TADRS).

Attending the ribbon cutting ceremony, Minister Andrews was joined by the Member for Paterson, the Hon Bob Baldwin MP, and, Raydon Gates, Chief Executive, Lockheed Martin Australia & New Zealand.

"This facility is part of our long term commitment to grow our presence in Australia, and create opportunities for highly skilled local jobs," said Raydon Gates.

"We are proud of our team and our innovative technologies that play such an important role in helping to ensure the security of Australian interests."

"We have had a presence in the Hunter Region since 2006, and we have grown steadily over the past nine years. This new facility provides us with an opportunity to significantly increase our footprint, and expand the number of programs we are able to support," added Gates.

Lockheed Martin Australia is the anchor tenant of the \$500 million Williamtown Aerospace Centre that covers an 89 hectare site adjoining the RAAF and Newcastle Airport. To date, the company employs more than 1,000 people in Australia, including 25 in Newcastle.

Hunter Diversity Awards

People working in the mining, banking, legal and Aboriginal affairs sectors have highlighted what is making the Hunter a fairer and more equitable place to live and work.

The winners of the inaugural Hunter Diversity Awards were announced at the International Women's Day breakfast on 6 March which featured special guest speaker, media personality Tracey Spicer. The Awards are an initiative of the Equal Futures Project - a local group of business leaders dedicated to raising awareness and funds that will facilitate gender equity in the region.

The winners are:

- **Inclusive workplace** - McCullough Robertson
- **Flexible workplace** - The Greater
- **Gender Equity workplace** - Aurizon
- **Diversity champion** - Kathy Butler from the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle

Equal Futures Project Awards Chair, Belinda Smith, said that the Awards showcased an impressive group of people who were 'walking the talk' when it came to equity and diversity.

"Winners represent a terrific sample of our region. From individuals who use their personal and professional skills to lead discussion and change, through to the large and geographically spread organisations whose staff create pilot programs that are setting new standards for flexibility in the workplace," she said.

"The work of a legal firm and a mining company demonstrate that diversity is a team effort but one that needs to be owned by

"Winners represent a terrific sample of our region. From individuals who use their personal and professional skills to lead discussion and change, through to the large and geographically spread organisations whose staff create pilot programs that are setting new standards for flexibility in the workplace".

Belinda Smith - Equal Futures Projects Awards Chair

all people across the entire organisation," Ms Smith said.

"Each of the winners, and the organisations that sponsored the awards, provide benchmarks for our region - ones that we should be proud of and work to support, she said.

The International Women's Day breakfast was sponsored by Pacific National. General Manager NSW/Vic, Stephen Cowan, welcomed the inclusion of the Awards in 2015.

"As part of the Asciano group we are committed to workplace diversity, with a particular focus on supporting the representation of all ranges of age and women at all levels of the company. It is the right thing to do, and it's good for our business. At a personal level, I have two children, a daughter and a son. I can't imagine limiting the future possibilities for either," Mr Cowan said.

The Awards were also supported by gender equity champions The University of Newcastle, The Sista Code, Hunter Region Chamber Alliance Partners, Sparke Helmore, ARTC and the Newcastle Herald.



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Airport contributes over \$1B to Hunter economy

Newcastle Airport's latest economic impact study has confirmed the Airport's role as one of the region's key economic and employment hubs, contributing \$1.19 billion annually to the Hunter's economy. The study measured the Airport's economic and social benefits to the Hunter region, updating findings of the previous study undertaken in 2011.

The study concluded that Newcastle Airport facilitates:

- Jobs - Direct and indirect employment of 3,346 jobs, including 654 direct jobs on the airport precinct.
- Economic activity - Direct and indirect contribution of \$1.19 billion to the local economy.

In the past decade Newcastle Airport's contribution to the local economy has increased from \$233.1 million annually in 2005 to the \$1.19 billion annually today. This significant increase in contribution is a result of increased air services, increased employment on and around the airport site, and numerous major construction projects completed on the airport site in the past decade.

More than a million passengers pass through the doors of the Airport each year, and Newcastle Airport's CEO, Paul Hughes commented that the study highlights the importance of the Airport to the region and the significance of Newcastle Airport as a transport hub. "The contribution of the Airport is widely recognised; however reports such as this highlight the significant flow-on effects that otherwise would remain invisible to the wider community" he said.

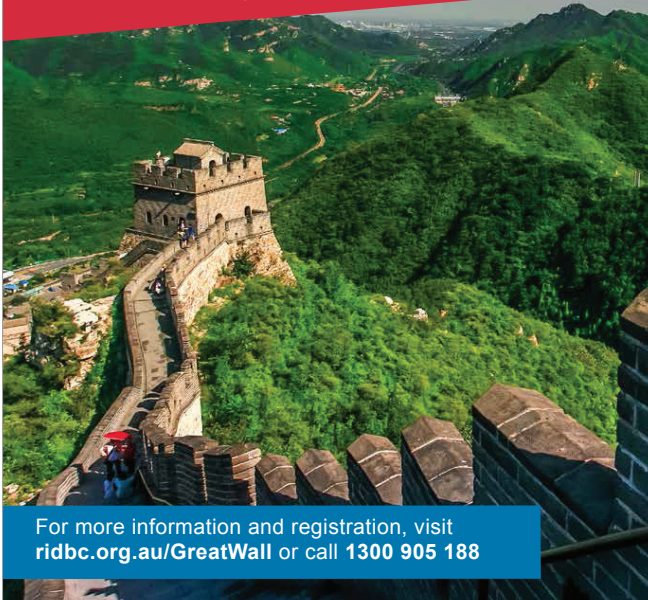
The Airport's support to the tourism industry is also significant, contributing \$305 million annually and supporting more than 1,750 jobs in this industry. In addition, the current construction program onsite at the Airport is contributing \$33 million in economic value and is generating 106 jobs.



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BUSINESS ANNIVERSARIES

COMPASS HOUSING

Compass is a Hunter success story built on the back of some very committed people and it has achieved spectacular growth of late because of those foundations. Its first company secretary Chris Dodds went on to become president of the Australian Council for Social Services.

Compass started as Newmacq Housing in 1985, with three part time staff, one office, 92 properties and net assets of \$142,000. Today it is the largest provider of community housing in Australia, employing 130 staff at 12 offices across the Hunter, Central Coast, Dubbo, Broken Hill and South East Queensland, manages 4,300 properties and its net assets are \$335 million. By the middle of this year it will manage more than 9,000 properties when it takes over 5,000 properties in the Queensland city of Logan.

30 YEARS

WHIPPER RECRUITMENT

With over 75 years of combined recruitment experience, Whipper Recruitment's highly reputable boutique recruitment company is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Established in March 2005, Whipper Recruitment continues to successfully provide recruitment solutions across a broad client base. The agency actively source contract and permanent employees for every level of white collar recruitment.

Founder Gail Whipper shares that, "The last 10 years have been an exciting and rewarding experience and we are excited to start our 11th year. I believe our success has been based on our strong commitment to customer service and our passionate desire to deliver value to people in a respectful and honest way. The journey has not been without challenges. Over the last decade, the business has had to face changing industry conditions combined with an uncertain economic climate. It is these challenges, which has encouraged us to constantly innovate and evolve."

10 YEARS

ROBERT CRAWFORD REAL ESTATE

Robert Crawford Real Estate was established in 1995 in the popular suburb of New Lambton. The past 20 years has seen the business grow to encompass a team of 12 employees, all of whom are dedicated to maintaining the strong reputation built by Robert of a company that puts their clients' needs first.

Whether its listing and marketing a property for sale, introducing buyers to their next potential home/investment, showcasing rental properties to potential tenants or managing & maintaining investment properties for our loyal landlords, Robert Crawford Real Estate focuses on a commitment to customer service.

The repeat business and referrals which the company consistently receives is a testament to the high standards of communication and business practice which Robert has developed over the last 20 years.

Robert Crawford Real Estate is excited about the future prospects for Newcastle and the Hunter region and is looking forward to continuing to provide a quality real estate experience.

20 YEARS

Does your business have a major anniversary coming up?

Contact HBR on (02) 4925 7760 or email garry@HBRmag.com.au for information on covering your business.

LET'S TALK WITH....

What's your current role?

My fulltime role is Director of Riskology Pty Ltd, a safety consultancy, where I help small and large business from all industries cut through the minefield of safety legislation to achieve compliance. I work with some of Australia's most well known brands right down to the mum and dad businesses and everything in between. I am also the founder of Hunter Safety Awards, Chair of Hunter branch of the Safety Institute of Australia, Board Director of Klik Lok Pty Ltd (a needle syringe manufacturer) and an Artist.

What job have you enjoyed most?

Definitely my role as a safety consultant at Riskology, I love seeing what other businesses are doing in this field, being able to help them improve. Safety is my true passion; to me it just makes sense! I have a strong belief that all businesses should have access to great safety advice, not just the ones with big pockets. It's not just the businesses with deep pockets that injure people and it was a goal when starting Riskology to give back to the community. Since starting the business in 2011 I've donated over \$80K worth of pro bono consulting to small Hunter charities and businesses.

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

I'm also a muscle car artist and paint cars, and dogs on canvas through my business called Paint My Ride. A lot of this work is for charity, last year I donated artworks to 16 local charity auctions and painted over 40 works for customers all over the world. Cars are in general a masculine subject, so I add a little bit of pink to all my paintings to give them a little bit of femininity. When I'm not doing that I'm dirt bike riding.

Where do you get your inspiration?

I get inspired through marketing and technology. One thing people hate with safety is all the paperwork, but there is so much technology out there now that you don't need to get buried under piles of paper. I love listening to business podcasts by Timbo Reid and Seth Godin, it gets me pumped and passes the time travelling in the car.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given?

Be yourself. For years I was a librarian type professional and really hid my personality as I thought I'd come across as more mature and respected. Interestingly, the more I was myself, the more my business relationships blossomed.

Tell us something that most people wouldn't know about you.

I'm studying Social Psychology of Risk - my third masters degree.

How would you like to see our region develop over the next decade?

I'd like to see the Hunter lead the way in safety. We have some great businesses doing amazing things in the safety realms, but it's hard to get noticed on a national scale. I'm kicking off the inaugural Hunter Safety Awards this year through which local businesses can receive recognition for the great work in safety that they do. For information about the awards you can go to the website: www.huntersafetyawards.com.au

Are you reading anything at the moment?

The new mine safety legislation – just kidding! I'm reading 'Inspiring Ted Talks' at the moment, 18 minute inspiring public speeches, they are really powerful!



Sarah-Jane
Dunford

Eight ways to improve profit in a business

David Collogan
CFO On-Call

'How to improve profit in a business' is a common question. Probably the question to ask first is 'How do I increase gross profit?' The reason gross profit is so important, is that if you can't make a decent gross profit, you're never going to make a good net profit... so this is the place to begin.

Selling more goods and services is often seen as the best way to improve profit. What we often see though, is that whilst sales go up, profit doesn't always follow. This is due to costs and overheads blowing out and eating up the added sales. It's amazing how businesses, like people, often live right up to their income!

A great way to ensure some of the funds from those extra sales end up on your bottom line and more importantly, in your bank account, is to focus on costs and overheads, just as much as sales.

Firstly let me explain what I mean by 'Cost of Goods' (COGs). These are sometimes referred to as 'Direct Costs' e.g. if you're selling a product, it's the cost of the actual product and any added costs to get it into your stock room or onto your retail shelf such as 'freight in'. If you're selling a service, it's the cost of the service person and any materials used on the job. Other expenses such as office rent, admin staff wages, stationery etc. are called Overheads or Indirect Costs.

An important thing to understand about the impact of reducing COGs, is that every dollar you save goes straight to your bottom line. Whereas when you make a dollar sale, perhaps only as little as 5 cents ends up on the bottom line, due to COGS, overheads, finance costs etc. This is a pretty sobering thought and a big incentive to focus on managing COGs and overheads.

If you're in a price conscious and competitive market your only avenue of making profit is often by managing and reducing costs.

Here's eight ways you can reduce COGs to increase your profit:

1. Reduce materials used on jobs by managing wastage and write offs.
2. Maximise efficiency of contractors and staff.
3. Review and negotiate with suppliers.
4. Look for innovative ways to change the way you perform processes.
5. Check 'Industry Benchmarks' to see what top performers are achieving.
6. Manage your margins by regularly looking at the percentage of COGs.
7. Use 'Purchase Orders'.
8. Have good bookkeeping processes for managing COGs and payment to suppliers.

The important thing to remember, is that every dollar saved in COGs, goes straight to your bottom line and may be a lot easier to achieve than the extra sales needed to get the same result.

For more details on achieving the eight ways, download the white paper *How to Grow Profit with \$0 on Marketing!* at info.cfooncall.com.au/how-to-grow-profit-with-0-spent-on-marketing

For further information call David on 0409 922 549, email davidc@cfooncall.com.au or visit www.cfooncall.com.au

David Collogan is a Partner at CFO On-Call. He has had a successful career, initially covering business banking and international trade finance, where he was a Senior Associate of the Australian Institute of Bankers. David has also held a State Manager role in a subsidiary of a global company, as well as experience across all levels of the franchise industry. He has also been self-employed as a dedicated Management Accountant and business support manager for various SMEs over the past seven years while he has studying his Master's degree.



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Start with **WHY**

Paul Siderovski
SiDCOR Chartered Accountants

Have you found yourself preparing for a meeting to get a new client and you're thinking of what your **ELEVATOR** pitch is? Only to realise s@#t it's not that great.

Your brain thinks of the right things to say that will get them across the line. The secret is to return to the vision you had for starting your business and the beliefs you have about what you do.

People buy **WHY** you do what you do, not what you do! A competitor can copy what you do, disguise and tweak it and say it's unique. They can't copy your **WHY**.....well they can, but it fizzles away and is seen through pretty quickly. I can truly say I have no competitor in the accounting space due to no other accountant having the same **WHY** as I do.

Why you do what you do comes from the heart and gut, not the brain. You don't think about it as it just comes naturally.

If you nail this part of your business, it will change the whole business and your life! Why? Everything you do for the business (marketing, staff engagement, recruitment, etc) has now a newfound **CONTEXT**. Before it's a lot of activity focusing on what you do.

I know this is deep, but get this part right for your business and it will grow very fast. I did this for my business five years ago and it changed everything. Only last week we helped a client realise the core of the **VISION** and **BELIEF** for their business, he then articulated in a meeting why he did what he did, and one of his employees was gob smacked and asked where did those words come from. It came from the heart and the understanding that **PEOPLE BUY WHY YOU DO WHAT YOU DO**.

For further information contact SiDCOR on 1300 743 267, email paul@sidcor.com.au or visit www.sidcor.com.au



Paul Siderovski, the founder and Managing Director of SiDCOR Chartered Accountants, has 19 years experience since starting as a chartered accountant with PricewaterhouseCoopers in 1995. Paul started Newcastle-based SiDCOR in 2002. Paul has a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Newcastle and is a Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Taxation Institute of Australia as well as the National Tax and Accountants Association.



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Why 63 could be your most valuable age

Matt Kerr
Pitcher Partners

Decisions made when you are 63 could have a significant impact on your retirement. It's not difficult to understand that the amount of tax you pay impacts the level of assets needed to fund your retirement and the amount you have to spend.

The tax concessions that apply to superannuation make it one of the best places to hold your retirement wealth and for many people could be the difference between having enough assets or not for their retirement.

With people living longer the risk of outliving your money is becoming real for many people, so it makes sense to utilise the benefits of super as much as you can. However, there are limits on the amount you can get into super and as you approach 65 the rules around making contributions change. To make sure you can maximise the amount you get into super means knowing the rules early – which is why your decisions at 63 are important.

The starting point is knowing whether you are eligible to make a contribution. Whilst you are under 65 you can contribute regardless of whether you are working or not.

However, when you turn 65 this changes and you need to meet the "work test" to make contributions. In the financial



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year you turn 65, so long as you have met this work test at some point during the year you are eligible to make a contribution.

Many people approaching 65 want to make larger contributions into their super – known as Non-Concessional Contributions (NCC). The current limit on NCC's is \$180,000 or \$540,000 by using the following 2 years limits as well (3 year cap). After 65 you can no longer access the 3 year cap, except in the financial year you turn 65.

For example

Alan worked full time up until his 65th birthday on 12 October 2015. He met the "work test", so he can make a contribution up until 30 June 2016. Alan makes the contribution in June, so he can still bring forward the next 2 years NCC limits. The total NCC Alan can contribute is \$540,000.

Joyce turned 65 on 15 May 2015 and still worked part time until Alan's 65th birthday. Joyce has met the work test in the current financial year, so she also can make a contribution before 30 June 2016 but as she was already 65 on 1 July 2015 Joyce can only contribute \$180,000.

If Joyce contributed \$185,000 prior to turning 65, triggering the 3 year cap, she would still be eligible to contribute the remainder of \$355,000 before 30 June 2016.

Now this is where planning early becomes important to make sure you can get the most into super as possible. You want to be able to maximise your contributions in the year you turn 65, so this may mean making smaller contributions in the years leading

up to 65 so you do not trigger the 3 year period too early. If you decide to trigger the 3 year cap at 63 you could be reducing the amount you can contribute to super by up to \$360,000.

To make the most of the superannuation concessions available may need some careful planning in the years leading up to your 65th birthday. Making the right decision when you are 63 can have a significant impact on the amount you can get into your super and ultimately your retirement spending.

For further information contact Pitcher Partners on (02) 4911 2000, email matt.kerr@pitcher.com.au or visit www.pitcher.com.au

Matt Kerr works for Pitcher Partners Wealth Management. He is a Chartered Accountant and a Certified Financial Planner. Matt has over 25 years assisting clients with their superannuation and personal finances. Matt is passionate about sharing his knowledge and experience with people to build relationships based on improving his client's understanding of their options, giving them control to make decisions.



Record low interest rates mean an acquisition can kick start your growth

Allan McKeown
Prosperity Advisers Group

I'm sure you're all familiar with the term "acquisition" but have you ever seriously considered it a viable component of your growth strategy? At a difficult time in the economic cycle surviving rather than growing is probably your most pressing issue. But acquisitions can be, and have long been, an excellent way to quickly increase revenues, expand products or service offerings, improve market reach and increase enterprise and shareholder value. That all sounds good but what does it really mean?

When defining an acquisitions strategy, smart companies always start with a fine-tuned business strategy. Once that business strategy is defined, they then look at acquisitions as a potential tactic that can help them achieve that strategy.

A fundamental part of every business strategy is growth, which can be achieved in a multitude of different ways. By examining key rationales for acquisition activity, it may become more evident why including acquisitions in your growth strategy warrants a closer look. The following list of acquisition benefits is not comprehensive, but it is a good start.

Scale. Greater scale provides opportunities for profit enhancement across many aspects of the company and its operations.

Market share. Control a greater percentage of the total available market. Anecdotal evidence and economic theory suggest that long-run profitability increases with market share as it gives you the opportunity to be a price maker not a price taker.



Economies of scale. Decreased per unit cost occurs as output increases. By consolidating and eliminating duplicative departments, job functions and certain processes, thereby lowering costs relative to the same revenue stream, significant improvement in margin can be realized.

Distribution channels. New or additional channels for distribution can be more quickly acquired than developed. Established distribution channels can take years to develop and are usually not easily penetrable.

High cost of excess capacity. Excess or idle capacity is a killer on margins. Every unit of excess capacity carries with it an incremental piece of overhead. Zero excess capacity equates to the lowest cost per unit.

Convergence. Products or services that incline towards each other, rather than ones that run parallel, present unique opportunities.

Cost synergies. Significant savings are generally found in production and procurement, but also present in marketing and advertising.

Intellectual property. Firms in need of IP as part of their strategy can often acquire it more quickly and less expensively than developing it.

Countercyclical balance. Firms in cyclical businesses may seek to acquire businesses that are countercyclical to absorb excess capacity or idle production.

Resource transfer. Resources are unevenly distributed across companies and the interaction of the target and acquiring firm resources can create value through either overcoming information asymmetry or by combining scarce resources.

Vertical integration. Vertical integration is the degree to which a firm owns its upstream suppliers and its downstream buyers.

So if you believe acquisition should be part of your overall growth strategy, is now a good time? Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) deal activity has taken a precipitous drop over the last few years from the previous all-time highs. Economic factors are the

key drivers behind reduced deal volume, particularly the severe tightening of the credit markets.

Although the global recession and constrained credit markets may make completing acquisitions more challenging, significant opportunities remain for well-positioned companies. Firms in stable, mature industries with strong balance sheets have opportunities not seen in decades. Lower valuations, together with fewer competitors capable of making acquisitions, indicates the time for making acquisitions couldn't be better. Interest rates are at record lows and credit is still available for strong companies making the right acquisitions for the right reasons.

Start the new year off by giving growth-by-acquisition a serious look. First and foremost, know your strategy and take into careful consideration whether the cultural aspects of an acquisition, and the affect it will have on your employees, will be beneficial to your firm's long-term viability.

For further information contact Prosperity Advisers Group on (02) 4907 7222, email mail@prosperityadvisers.com.au or visit www.prosperityadvisers.com.au

Allan McKeown is the CEO and Founder of Prosperity Advisers and has over 25 years experience providing growth advice to a range of business clients.



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GREATER BUILDING SOCIETY

Michael King has joined the Greater Building Society as Chief Risk Officer, replacing Scott Morgan who was appointed CEO in late 2014. Michael will lead the Risk, Compliance and Internal Audit teams for the Hunter-based financial institution. He comes well equipped for the role with 35 years of experience. Michael has a Bachelor of Business from Monash, is a CPA and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



EVOKE PROJECTS

Candice Lafforgue has been appointed as Senior Design Consultant at Evoke Projects. Based between Sydney, Central Coast and Newcastle, she will lead the design team and drive growth. Candice has over 12 years of experience in corporate design, both within Australia and internationally, for companies such as Sheldon Commercial Interiors and Accent Office Interiors.



NEXUS LAW GROUP

Nexus Law Group has welcomed another Consulting Principal to its growing network of senior lawyers with **Justin Sprogis**, formerly of Gadens Lawyers, joining the team. Justin brings significant experience in the banking and finance sectors, having worked for Freehills, Clayton Utz and the Commonwealth Bank.



NEWCASTLE PBS

Ross Griffiths has been appointed Director of Newcastle Permanent Building Society. He was chosen for his strong retail banking, finance and risk management experience. In 2014, Ross retired as Group Chief Credit Officer, Group Risk Management after 28 years' service at a major bank.



HUNTER TAFE

Christine Warrington has stepped into the role of CEO/Institute Director at Hunter TAFE after the departure of Phil Cox. Christine will take the reins at Hunter TAFE until recruitment is finalised. She brings many years of experience in VET sector leadership positions in TAFE NSW across the state and has held the Deputy CEO/Institute Director position at Hunter TAFE for eight years.



CREST FINANCIAL SERVICES

Andrew Thomas has joined the adviser team at Crest Financial Services. After completing his degree, he became a para-planner with Crest, and then progressed through the adviser development program at the AMP Horizons Academy, further strengthening his existing understanding of both technical strategies and the emotional needs of clients.

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\$17 million mine subsidence strategy a major boost for investment in Newcastle

NSW Treasurer Andrew Constance and Liberal candidate for Newcastle Karen Howard have announced one of the major barriers to new job creation in Newcastle's CBD would be addressed through a mine subsidence remediation strategy.

The NSW Government has allocated \$17 million from the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund (HIIF) to address the critical issue of mine subsidence, which has been a major issue for developments in Newcastle.

Potential subsidence from historic mine workings in the Newcastle CBD has been a roadblock to the city's ability to compete on a level playing field to attract investment

"One of the major barriers to new office space and job-creating development



Major projects such as NeW Space have required major subsidence remediation

in Newcastle has been mine subsidence. The Baird Government is committed to practical solutions to solve the problem," Mr Constance said.

"There has been no greater advocate for fixing the problem than Karen Howard."

Ms Howard said funding for the Strategy will lead to substantial new investment in the city, on top of the billion dollars already committed by the private sector.

"\$17 million will unlock so much new commercial space, and with that space will come opportunity and smart jobs for our kids. It will also enable residential development which will enliven the city centre."

The \$17 million will fund a Mine Subsidence Remediation Strategy to be led by the Hunter Development Corporation (HDC), in conjunction with the Mine Subsidence Board.

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Increased new home building in the Hunter

ABS figures on new home building approvals indicate that activity across the Hunter / Central Coast region increased slightly during 2014 according to the Housing Industry Association.

During 2014, a total of 4,850 approvals were issued for new dwellings in the Hunter and Central Coast regions, an increase of 6.3% on the previous year. However, the composition was mixed, with multi-unit approvals increasing by some 28.4%, while detached house approvals fell back by 2.0%.

"Percentage increases in total dwelling approvals were the strongest in the most southerly sections of the region with Lake Macquarie up almost 40%, Wyong up 47% and Gosford up over 30% compared to the 2013 calendar year," explained Craig Jennion, HIA Executive Director for the Hunter region.

"The increased pipeline of new dwelling activity during 2014 is a welcome development, and contributes to the long-term prospects for the Hunter region," Mr Jennion said.

"The decline in detached house approvals in the local area contrasts with a strengthening sector across the rest of NSW," Mr Jennion pointed out.

"New detached house building is struggling against the backdrop of high levels of taxation, inefficient infrastructure charging designs and the problem of land supply bottlenecks. We call on state and local government to engage with us in order to try and promote better outcomes in this area of the market".

"Despite this there is every reason for the industry to be optimistic this year, particularly following the news in early January that new dwelling approvals across Australia reached their highest level on record during November. This news, followed by strong lending figures adds further to the evidence that Australia's new home building industry should start 2015 on a strong footing," concluded Mr Jennion.

Slow upswing for Australian commercial property

Australasian commercial property markets are delivering favourable returns against the global property market, with the industrial sector continuing to lead the recovery, according to the latest Property Council/IPD Australia Index.

The commercial property index, which tracks more than 1300 assets with a total value of \$143 billion, pointed to a commercial property market in "slow upswing mode", delivering a total return of 10.6 per cent in 2014, a rise on the 10 per cent return reported in the September quarter.

The upswing in return performance is evident across all major property sectors, IPD reported, with industrial holding its place as the top-performing sector – it delivered an annualised return performance of 13% (to December 2014). The hotels sector was not far behind, reporting returns of 12%. Retail came in at 10.7% and office at 10%.

IPD said the nature of the upswing investment cycle "varies across sectors and reflects the different interplay between space market fundamentals and capital market conditions in each of the respective property sectors".

According to IPD, the strengthening in return performance reflects the ongoing compression in cap rates, which is reflected in stronger capital return. In contrast, space market fundamentals still remain weak from a historical perspective. As at December 2014, average portfolio cap rates stood at 6.8%, reflecting an average tightening of 30bps over the previous 12 month period.

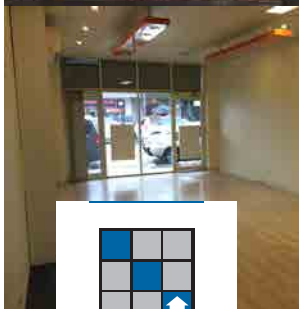


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Hunter's housing deficit to rise by 30,000

The Lower Hunter needs to accelerate housing supply or risk a widening deficit of over 30,000 homes within a decade, according to new figures released by the Property Council of Australia.

Missing The Mark – An Audit of Housing Targets is the most comprehensive research published on the Lower Hunter's housing supply since 2005 and shows that by 2024, the number of homes needed will have fallen short by almost 30,000.

"We need to turbocharge housing supply because right now homebuyers and our economy are paying the price," Hunter Regional Director Andrew Fletcher said.

"Home building is critical to the region's economy – and supports tens of thousands of tradespeople and other workers.

"If we fail to meet demand, prices rise and housing becomes less affordable for the next generation of homebuyers."

"So far, we've lacked the volume and type of housing needed to keep pace with population growth – that shows we need to overhaul the approvals process to provide additional supply."

"And NSW needs a planning system which is simpler, easier and more efficient"

- In the first decade since housing targets were set for the Lower Hunter, we have come up over 23,000 homes short – or 51%
- Annual approvals over the past decade averaged 2,270 – against a target of 4,600
- Population projections show the Lower Hunter will need to produce 2,944 homes each year – but based on current rate of approvals, the annual shortfall is 673, or 6730 over the decade
- The combination of under-performance in the first decade and projected shortfall in the coming decade means the Lower Hunter will be 29,430 homes by 2024.

"A big priority needs to be giving certainty to infrastructure provision and how developer contributions are charged."

"Without that certainty, potential investors will continue to be reluctant to undertake greenfield residential development."

"That certainty and investor confidence can be delivered by fast-tracking the Hunter Growth & Infrastructure Plan."

Mr Fletcher said the certainty provided by the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy (NURS) and the attached infrastructure funding was a prime example of how to unleash investment in new housing.

"Since the NURS was released in December 2012, development projects worth \$1.05 billion have commenced or received approval and the Newcastle city centre is on-track to accommodate 6,000 new residents within 20 years."

"The same model of strategic policy settings and fully funded infrastructure projects should now be applied to the wider region to get greenfield residential developments moving."



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New Native Title and Aboriginal land claims in the Hunter

Elizabeth McDonald
McCabes

It has been a busy few months for Aboriginal land rights in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley, with the registration of a claim under the Native Title Act and the lodgement of several claims under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

Native Title

A native title claim has been registered over a large tract of the Hunter Valley by the Plains Clans of the Wonnarua People. This is the second native title claim to be registered in the Hunter region in the last two years with the first being the Awabakal and Guringai People's claim which covers large parts of Newcastle, Maitland, Cessnock and the Central Coast.

The registration of a native title claim signals that the relevant Indigenous group has produced enough evidence to clear the first hurdle in the Native Title Act. While it can take many years for the Court to finally determine the claim, registration gives the Indigenous group a significant interim right, namely, the "right to negotiate" with parties seeking to carry out certain types of development on certain types of Crown land.

One key example of how the "right to negotiate" can work is that, as a result of registration, the Wonnarua People could have the "right to negotiate" with a mining company seeking to acquire a new mining lease in the claim area. This does not mean that the Wonnarua People will automatically be entitled to a large royalty from mining companies, but it will mean that mining companies seeking to develop certain land will need to negotiate in good faith with a view to obtaining their agreement to the development.

Aboriginal Land Rights

Following on from its successful land claim over the Newcastle Post Office, the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council (Awabakal LALC) has lodged claims over the Wickham to Newcastle Rail Corridor and the former Newcastle Bowling Club site at King Edward Park.

These land claims differ from native title claims. The Native Title Act permits a claim to be made over land that has traditionally been used by the Indigenous group and continues to be used in those traditional ways. The need to prove this "ongoing

connection" makes it almost impossible for native title to be recognised in highly developed areas, such as much of the eastern coastline of Australia.

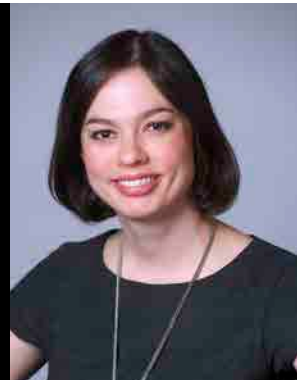
In contrast, the Aboriginal Land Rights Act permits an Aboriginal Land Council to make a land claim over Crown land that is not in use or occupation or that is not needed for an "essential public purpose" or residential use.* Once a land claim is made, the Minister must decide whether to approve it.

While the parallels between the Post Office and the Bowling Club sites are obvious, it is impossible to speculate what documentation is in Government files regarding its current intentions for that site or the rail corridor and, therefore, what the Minister's decision will be. Given the development interest in the rail site and the value of the land claimed, we expect a decision will be made quickly.

*** This is a summary of the key criteria. Additional limitations are contained in section 36 of the Act.**

For further information contact McCabes on (02) 4040 9643, email e.mcdonald@mccabes.com.au or visit www.mccabes.com.au

Elizabeth McDonald is a Senior Associate at McCabes and is a specialist property and commercial lawyer. During her career Elizabeth has represented public companies, developers, Government bodies, retirement village owners, not-for-profit entities and individuals in property and commercial matters. She has extensive property experience across a broad range of property issues.



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COMMERCIAL

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Exceptional quality building that mixes the old with the new.
Fully modernised set up with 11 offices of various sizes and open plan areas, boardroom, meeting room. Awesome Foyer / Waiting Area.
4 car Garage + on-site parking for an additional 8-10 vehicles and 2 street access on a double block.
Disability Access at Rear entrance
This property exudes class and quality throughout.

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92 Glenwood Drive, Thornton
Positioned in the well known and highly regarded Thornton Business Park.
Brand new - major industrial development with high exposure and modern office layout. Engineered for 10 ton crane, 8.5m eave height and 3 x 6m wide roller doors. Accommodates 19 on site car spaces on a level site.
Note - adjoining site of 2,571m2 is also available for purchase/lease - Total Land area available - 5,587m2

RUTHERFORD \$990,000 + GST



1-5 Burlington Place, Rutherford
Don't miss this well appointed purpose built heavy vehicle service facility.
Features include: 222 m2 panel shop and spray booth, 900 m2 combined RTA approved pit bay, workshop, wash bay and storage shed with awning. Along with 137m2 freestanding fully air conditioned reception area and offices, with dual access for drive through convenience.
Located in thriving Rutherford this property is a must for the OWNER OCCUPIER or the SMART INVESTOR.

**Tony Cant Commercial
Phone: 4933 6299**

Gateshead sales fetches \$2.75 million

A property at 135 Bulls Garden Road, Gateshead which was partly occupied by Fox Mining has been sold by Byrne Tran and Jayson Robertson from Colliers International on behalf of Receivers and Managers, Grant Thornton.

The property sold for \$2.75 million following an Expressions of Interest campaign. The eventual purchaser was a local investor who plans to refurbish the existing improvements totalling around 5,389 sqm.

The property is now being offered for lease through Colliers International and various size office, warehouse and workshop accommodation next to TLE Electrical.



Beresfield industrial land sold

A lot of approximately 1500 sqm has been sold in the Freeway North Business Park at Beresfield.

The land is conveniently located at the end of the M1, providing easy access to Sydney and highway linkage to Newcastle. It is also in proximity to the Hunter Expressway, offering easy access to Cessnock and the Upper Hunter.

Paul Tilden from Raine & Horne Commercial negotiated the deal.



Hunter Freeway access attracts buyer to Kurri Kurri

Tony Cant Commercial recently sold a major warehouse in Kurri Kurri at auction for \$2,450,000. This property was purchased to allow the owner/occupier to manage a Terex distributorship close to a major transport hub. The Hunter Expressway is only 3 minutes away

The property included:

- Clear Span warehouse area
- ample office space / training rooms / amenities
- 7 metre eave height
- roller doors at each end of the building
- excellent truck access
- loading bay
- airconditioned offices and warehouse area
- fully fenced and secure site
- plenty of parking for the staff

The property had a land area of 2.42 ha with a building area of 6,141 sqm.

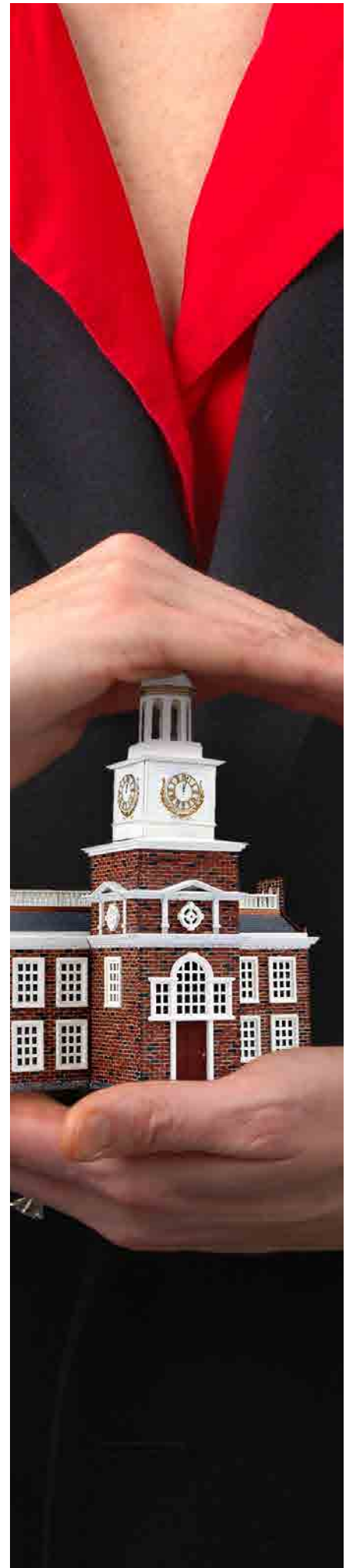


Mayfield industrial unit sold

A small industrial unit has been sold at Unit 11, 56 Industrial Drive, Mayfield for \$222,500 + GST.

Only minutes from the Newcastle CBD and the Port, it includes ground first floor offices with air-conditioning, small rear yard, rear roller door access to warehouse and easy vehicular access into the complex. The warehouse area is approximately 132 sqm.

The sale was through Paul Tilden at Raine & Horne Commercial Newcastle.



The Power of Online Video

Martin Adnum and Jamie Lewis
Out of the Square Media

We often hear from our customers that their customers "can't quite get it until they actually see it". Well, that's why video content is so important in shifting potential customers to embrace your products and services.

One reason video is so increasingly popular comes down to our busy schedules – time! So much more information can be digested through a combination of visual and audio storytelling than simply text. Plus the recall of that information, when presented succinctly is much higher, with the retention rate for visual information reach 65% vs 10% for text-based information.¹

The medium dictates the message

We strongly believe, and it works time and time again for our clients, that the medium dictates the message. To capitalise on the power of online video, avoid simply running your corporate video or television commercial, instead tailor a message that inspires customers to take action.

Your potential customer is right on the other side of the screen, so talk to them like you're there with them. Viewing content on a mobile device is the most intimate of all mediums and it's no wonder consumers who view video ads on a mobile device are three times as likely to click through.²

Less is more

Being succinct is an art form and we love seeing clients' reactions when a video can portray a lifetime of success, innovation and achievement in 60 seconds, while instilling

confidence in a potential customer. The power of video should portray the value of your products and services to show customers the difference your business offers.

Here's some statistics that we've seen with our own clients:

- Retailers finding 40% increases in purchases as a result of video.³
- Shoppers who view video are 1.81x more likely to purchase than non-viewers.⁴

Taking a leadership position with regular market updates and industry commentary can help instil confidence in consumers before they even make direct contact with you.

Be relevant

Video can play a fundamental role in helping your business with search optimisation. The title and description of your online video is just as important as your content. We work very closely with search data to determine names, descriptions and metadata for online videos.

An interesting fact is that merely having the word "video" in an email subject line boosts open rates 18.5%, click through rates by 64.8%, click to open rates by 39% and reduces unsubscribes by 26%.⁵ That's a powerful incentive to engage in video and engage existing and potential customers. We've seen it work constantly with our own e-newsletters. Viewing is pleasure, reading is a chore.

Just remember, be relevant, be true to your business and be engaging – it's your chance to tell the world you exist!



1. Social Media Today. Internet Marketing Trends and Tactics for 2014 [INFOGRAPHIC]. 2. Mobile Marketer. Click-Through Rate Triples for Mobile Video Ads: Report. 3. Multichannel Merchant. Give the Consumers What They Want: Video. 4. Invocto. E-Commerce Video Benchmarks Report: Q2 & Q3 2013. 5. MarketingProfs. The Most (and Least) Effective Keywords in Email Subject Lines.

ONLINE CONTENT

CREATORS



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There is an art and science to creating online content that works effectively. Our team has been creating all forms of content that inspire and educate potential customers for our clients. From the strategy and writing of the content to production and distribution, we do it all in-house and welcome open collaboration with our clients. In fact it's the key to the success we share with them.

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INSPIRED SOLUTIONS



Steve Graham
Lake Macquarie City Council

Social media marketing has revolutionised the corporate world. It has changed the way in which businesses engage with their target markets to increase brand recognition, and customer loyalty, and has assisted governments to open doors to communities that were previously hard to reach. It has become an integral communication tool, not least it can reach people in their lounge room, office, or kids' soccer game, but it is not the be-all-and-end-all solution to marketing and shouldn't be treated as such.

It is often assumed that social media will solve all communication or marketing objectives of an organisation, especially for those with a limited budget. However, while 70% of Australians use some form of social media, 30% don't. For this reason using social media as a core marketing strategy will fail to deliver. Yes, you can benefit from using social media,

but its impact is greatest when it complements traditional forms of communication. To reach the most people as we possibly can Lake Macquarie City Council uses a combination of communication methods including media, advertising, direct marketing, events, and social media.

When utilising social media it's also important to remember that this is not a popularity contest. With growth in social media numbers, comes growth in audience and community participation, and with that comes greater reach. In the past six months, Lake Macquarie City Council's Facebook page 'likes' have increased by almost 50 per cent, and the expectation is that they will grow to more than 10,000 by June 2015. For a regional council, that is impressive, but achieving targeted growth is more important to us than rapid growth because it's a more rusted-on following.

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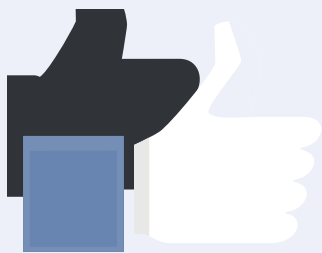
Social media growth needs to occur within the markets that will, or might later, benefit from engaging with you. We engage on multiple platforms, use a personalised approach to posts, tailor content for audience segments and, when we can, we invest in paid boosts to our social media where we are likely to get a return on the investment. We also aim to offer several topics or services at a time, to ensure we don't lose a particular audience by 'bombing' our platforms with one subject.

As is the case with traditional media, putting something up online doesn't necessarily mean it will be read. Without planned communications, you will fail to make impact. The solution to balancing the benefits with the amount of effort needed to manage social media platforms comes down to knowing what you want to get out of it in the first place. Our strategy is to deliver information about our plans, projects, activities events and decisions as promptly as possible, to as many people as possible, to an audience that has chosen to interact with us on social

media. In a nutshell, keep it relevant, don't try too hard or not hard enough, know what you want to get out of social media, and tailor it to the widest possible audience not with generic posts, but with multiple topics in a reasonable amount of time.

For further information contact Steve Graham on 02 4921 0587 or email sgraham@lakemac.nsw.gov.au

Steve Graham is Manager of Lake Macquarie City Council's Customer Service and Communications Department. He has extensive experience in all forms of media and communications including time as Media Advisor to the Minister for Local Government and editor of Mt Druitt Standard, Mosman Daily and Hornsby Advocate.



Like



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Strategic market plans

Maria Charlton **Map Marketing**

A well designed market plan articulates the nature of your products, how these products benefit your target market, your strategic branding and competitive position.

An effective market plan needs to identify all actions that need to be performed to create viable customer relationships by capturing their mindshare and creating long term business relationships. It also needs to persuade and motivate staff that your products are market worthy and value creating, and that your business is a great place to work for.

About 60% of services providers are renowned for their lack of market planning, mainly because it is viewed as the domain of product providers. But, in this fragile economic and financial environment these firms are the main beneficiaries of market planning especially if longevity is a priority.

Benefits of a Market Plan

- Pinpoints current business position and future market direction
- Designs and implements strategic branding to differentiate your business
- Outlines how you intend to deliver a unique experience for your customers so as to capture their mindshare
- Provides a plan of how to attract new prospects and how to convert prospects to profitable customers
- Identifies business resources and staff skills that need to be created and developed to support market focus
- Keeps you focused, conserves time and effort for reaching your goals
- Clarifies your business priorities and evaluates marketing action plans against goals
- Identifies strategic partners and referrers who can help you achieve goals
- Determines your competitive advantages and disadvantages
- Identifies the trends affecting your target market
- Clarifies how to generate cash and profitable business creation
- Indicates how promotional initiatives can help you achieve your business goals
- Sets priorities and deadlines so that staff are working towards the same end game
- Increases business productivity by at least 30%

How do You Complete a Strategic Market Plan

- Complete client, supplier, and prospect research
- Undertake environmental research including risks, opportunities, & competitor
- Involve & get key staff involved
- Use an external marketing specialist to facilitate the process
- Draw up a written strategic marketing plan for the next year
- Assign responsibility for the implementation & evaluation
- Reduce the contents to 1-2 pages & have these as a screensaver on every staff's computer

For further information contact Maria Charlton on (02) 4929 7766, email maria@mapmarketing.com.au or visit www.mapmarketing.com.au

For the last 26 years **Maria Charlton** has owned and operated MAP Marketing, a business to business marketing enterprise that focuses on strategic advertising campaigns; market research, market strategies and contract marketing. She is a Certified Practising Marketer and Fellow with the Australian Marketing Institute. Maria has completed a B.Com (Accountancy) and MBA (Marketing and Management) through the University of Newcastle and numerous online technology and social media courses through Universal Class.



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kismarketing.com.au

Newcastle Office

Level 2, 432 Hunter Street,
Newcastle NSW 2300
P: 4929 5005



Hosting a client event – giving back to your clients

Jessica Shuwalow
Rethink Financial Group

For any businesses contemplating hosting a client event I highly encourage it. If you get clear on your purpose for hosting the event, the format right, it really gives you and your clients an opportunity to connect on a more personal level, while also adding additional value to the client's relationship with you and your business. Plus, on most occasions clients will invite a guest who is similar to them and that they know could benefit from your services and you will potentially attract new clients to your business.

To give you some working examples of a client event that has worked well for us, I'd like to share the story of our 'Night On The Couch' event.

Due to popular demand at the end of last year we, Rethink Financial Group, hosted our third 'Night On The Couch' client event. The purpose for us holding these events is to enhance our clients' experience of financial planning by introducing them to the greater Rethink Financial Group community in a fun, loving, relaxed and educational environment.

The topic for our most recent event was travel. The reason we selected this topic was for two reasons. Firstly, because we ask our clients what topics they'd like to learn more about and travel was one of the most popular topics. Secondly, at Rethink Financial Group we encourage clients to put the things that are most important to them at the top of their priority list. It's about putting your big rocks in first. Your big rocks are the things that you value most, then the tedious things can work around your big rocks. The most common big rocks are: family and health, which for many translates into things like holidays and travel.

Like previous events, the last 'Night on the Couch' event was a huge success, attracting more than 60 guests from all over the local area to an intimate forum featuring travel insights from two local notable travel expert identities (Jan Ross Manager Tourism & Economic Development at Newcastle City Council and Michelle Barker Managing Director at Jayes Travel) and one interstate expert (Kristy Oliver Social Impact, Freelance Writer, Speaker and Adventure Connector). Overall attendees rated the evening 9.3 out of 10.

At the end of the event before the final networking session, speakers were invited back to the stage and seated on the infamous couch to respond to questions presented by guests in a moderated question and answer format. For some guests this was the highlight of the night, they had their questions from 'What's happening with Ebola in Africa?' to 'Where are the best places to go in the Newcastle and Hunter region for those with restricted mobility?'

The event received rave reviews from clients.

If you do host an event, be sure to request feedback and ask your clients what topics they're interested in so you can get an understanding of the value you're adding to your clients and how to plan for the next event.

I invite you to explore hosting a client event based on connecting with your clients and giving back to your clients and observe what comes back to you and your business,

**For further information call (02) 4962 4440,
email jessica@rethinkfinancial.com.au or visit
www.rethinkfinancial.com.au**

Jessica Shuwalow is the Business Development and Marketing Manager at Rethink Financial Group. She has over a decade of experience in the finance and property industry, mostly working across marketing and product and service development. She is also a regular finance columnist in the local Post newspaper.



Walking the fine line between creative and simple

Cristen Cable
KIS Marketing

We all aspire to be a marketing genius who creates the most creative campaigns in the market and is known as a marketing mastermind. Although this all sounds fantastic, it may not have the positive effect you were hoping for. You must remember that just because you can understand the creative campaign message, doesn't mean that the target audience will interpret it the same way. You may see it as engaging, but many consumers will see it as overwhelming.

Now we look at another approach to marketing – keeping it simple. Keeping it simple doesn't mean that your campaigns are boring and ad-hoc. Rather it means that you have thought long and hard about what you want your message to say, and you have created a campaign that is easily understood by your target market. According to research conducted by Harvard Business Review, "what consumers want from marketers, is simply, simplicity."

So how do you walk the fine line between creative and simple? The answer is simple, excuse the pun. You need to have one foot on either side of the line. That's right, you really need a balance of both creativity and simplicity when it comes to marketing.

C.W. Ceran said "Genius is the ability to reduce the complicated to the simple." Therefore, when aspiring to be a marketing genius, you should aim to be able to think of creative campaigns, but also know how to keep them simple to ensure they are understood by your target market, not just us marketing masterminds.

**For further information contact KIS Marketing on (02) 4934 4556,
email cristen@kismarketing.com.au or visit www.kismarketing.com.au.**

Cristen Cable is Managing Director of KIS Marketing. She has over a decade of marketing experience. Cristen has been both a marketing manager and public relations manager in various industries, planning and implementing a huge range of marketing activities. She is also a casual lecturer at the University of Newcastle teaching marketing to undergraduate and postgraduate students.



KEEP IT
SIMPLE!



Hedweld looking forward to a successful 2015

After what has been a challenging year for the Australian mining industry Hedweld is optimistic about 2015. Hedweld, which has been in business for 35 years has just survived its fourth industry downturn and is now growing.

Hedweld has established itself as a world leader in the design and manufacture of mining and safety equipment, known for its Trilift range of component handling equipment and the Safe-Away range of access systems. Using the expertise and technology acquired in the mining sector, in 2014 Hedweld launched a new company Milbrotec to offer solutions for the agricultural sector. It is this innovation and diversification of our products and markets that will provide growth opportunities in the years ahead.

Managing Director Ian Hedley said "2015 will see great developments within our Milbrotec range. This is an exciting time for our newest business".

Hedweld currently employ 88 full time staff. The week before

Christmas Hedweld added seven new apprentices and now has 16 trainees and apprentices on the team. Since June 2014 Hedweld has also been in the position to recruit and employ four permanent staff and three casual staff.

Managing Director Ian Hedley said "I am very proud that in a time when other companies are still in the unfortunate position where they are having to lay off staff in order to survive, Hedweld (having restructured) are now in the position to grow our team."

Although the mining industry has a long recovery ahead of it, Hedweld's export sales have been growing to 72% of total sales this financial year. Hedweld entered three new markets in 2014 and now exports to 31 countries.

Hedweld's global network of agents and distributors has delivered this growth and provided local product support internationally. Hedweld's export market has seen them through the mining downturn and indications are that things are starting to look forward domestically.



New apprentices at the staff information Day: Dean Horton, Sophie Comrie, Michael Cannard, Joshua Whittington, Shane Kattau, Braydon Anderson and Ryan Unger.

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Community room officially opened

Community groups and organisations now have a new meeting space at their disposal, thanks to the partnership between BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal and Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten Inc.

The Mt Arthur Coal Community Room is a new resource made possible by the pre-school's \$1.1 million expansion funded by Mt Arthur Coal.

Peter Sharpe, NSW Energy Coal Asset President, said the creation of a community room was a nice complement to the pre-school expansion.

"Mt Arthur Coal was extremely proud to contribute to an increase in child care spaces in the Muswellbrook community.

"We are equally proud to see that our investment has now created a space where community groups and organisations can

meet and plan their activities in a secure environment, with all of the required amenities.

"We hope the Mt Arthur Coal Community Room will be put to good use and serve as a unique meeting place within our community for several years to come," Mr Sharpe said.

Kelly Constable, Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten Director and teacher, said the school is excited to now be opening its doors to young and old alike.

The Mt Arthur Coal Community Room will comfortably sit 30 adults, but can also accommodate playgroups of approximately 20 adults and children.

"We hope the Mt Arthur Coal Community Room will be put to good use and serve as a unique meeting place within our community for several years to come"

Peter Sharpe - NSW Energy Coal Asset President



BHP Billiton NSW Energy Coal Asset President Peter Sharpe and Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten Director Kelly Constable proudly display the Mt Arthur Coal Community Room's new wall plaque

A collage of images related to mining safety. It includes the "HI-VIS" logo in large yellow letters, the website "WWW.HIVISMINING.COM.AU", a "AUSTRALIAN MADE AND OWNED" logo, various safety signs like "BLASTING TODAY" and "BLAST GUARD", and a large yellow mining truck with the number "480".

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Partnering to see communities prosper – *It's Who We Are*



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Pioneering Through Partnership

Bengalla mine gains consent until 2038

The future of the Bengalla mine and its 400 employees has been assured following the NSW Government's approval of a new Development Consent for mining until 2038.

Bengalla General Manager Operations Jo-Anne Scarini said "This approval secures a long term future for our mine, which provides work for 400 employees and flow on jobs in the surrounding region.

"We have always planned to continue mining at Bengalla and spoken with the community about this from the very beginning, including in our original Environmental Impact Statement in 1993.

"Our mining operations will continue to move away from Muswellbrook, on land already owned by Bengalla and Coal & Allied.

"This approval comes with comprehensive conditions that have been determined by the Department of Planning and Environment and the Planning Assessment Commission through a rigorous assessment process.

"We are committed to operating our mine responsibly, by working closely with community members and maintaining our high environmental standards.

"Bengalla has been part of the Muswellbrook community for more than 16 years and we look forward to continuing to make a strong contribution over coming decades.

"Last year we spent close to \$130 million with more than 350 businesses in NSW and around two thirds of that was spent here in the Hunter Valley.

"We will be continuing the strong partnerships we have developed with local community groups, including the donation of more than \$270,000 in 2014."

The new Development Consent provides the potential to increase employment in the future, if a decision is made to expand production to the maximum approved limit of 15 million Run of Mine (ROM) tonnes a year.

Bengalla is currently completing a ramp up to an annual production rate of 10.7 million ROM tonnes, the limit of its previous Development Consent.

"After expansions to our coal handling and preparation plant over a number of years, we are bringing on extra heavy equipment."

"This is creating work for around 40 more people to operate and maintain the new fleet. We are focussed on providing opportunities for local people and increasing the proportion of women in the operation."

"This is creating work for around 40 more people to operate and maintain the new fleet. We are focussed on providing opportunities for local people and increasing the proportion of women in the operation."

- General Manager Operations - Jo-Anne Scarini



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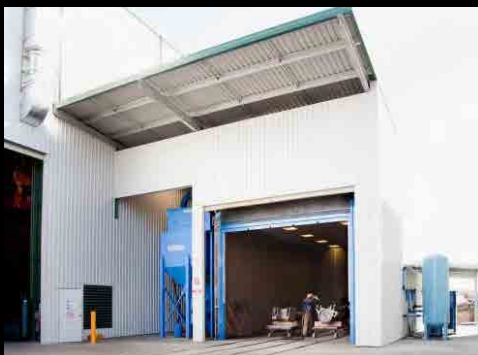
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New local apprentices at Eraring

Australia's largest power station has again committed to educating young local workers, with five new apprentices joining the 23 apprentices and trainees already working at Eraring Power Station.

Origin Energy employs mechanical, electrical and boilermaker apprentices and hosts a number of trainees across Eraring Power Station. The apprenticeships and traineeships consist of a structured training program and work experience which leads to nationally accredited qualifications on successful completion.

Tony Phillips, Eraring Power Station Manager, said that investing in training and education is a key component of Origin's workforce strategy.

"Eraring plays a crucial role in the state's energy supply, and we are always seeking to improve our methods and processes in terms of safety, efficiency, quality and environmental impact," Mr Phillips said. "Apprentices are able to provide a fresh perspective to the work, and with their exposure to the latest training material they are able to assist in keeping the station up to date with leading industry practices."

The new apprentices, three mechanical and two electrical, commenced at Eraring in January. These apprentices follow the footsteps of Eraring Power Station trainee Josh Lodge, who was named Australia's top trainee at the 2014 Australian Training Awards.



As a proud contributor to the Hunter region Origin are pleased to welcome this year's new apprentices to Eraring Power Station.

Origin's Eraring Power Station is located on the western shore of Lake Macquarie and plays a crucial role in maintaining secure, reliable and affordable energy for millions of Australians.

 originenergy.com.au

Planning agreement gives boost to community projects

Singleton Council has signed a Voluntary Planning Agreement with Liddell Coal Operations that will contribute \$580,000 toward community projects.

Singleton Council General Manager Lindy Hyam and Liddell Coal Operations General Manager Steve Hubert signed the agreement in Singleton last week.

The signing follows the approval of the Liddell Coal Operations Extension Project on 1 December 2014 and will provide developer contributions for the Singleton local government area in accordance with the agreement.

Singleton Netball Association is set to receive \$80,000 towards the construction of a new clubhouse in Rose Point Park while \$200,000 has already been spent on relocating and upgrading the existing Hebden Hall.

Singleton Council will receive \$300,000 over five years to cover the interest for a loan taken out for the purpose of installing a caretaker facility and boom gates at Lake St Clair.

Singleton Council General Manager Lindy Hyam says Council adopted a Master Plan for Lake St Clair in December that details a staged improvement program for the facility.

"While the full improvement program would cost \$3.8 million over seven years and will be heavily reliant on grant funding, we are taking immediate steps to improve security and access to the park," she says. "Last year the Council approved a \$230,000 loan to install a more permanent caretaker's cottage and the boom gates."

"The funding we will receive under the Voluntary Planning Agreement with Liddell Coal Operations will cover the interest payments we will accrue on that loan and keep the burden off ratepayers."

"As we have done with other projects, including the Gym & Swim redevelopment, the Singleton Regional Livestock Market and the town centre revitalisation, Council will be pursuing every external funding opportunity available to try and implement the full master plan."

Ms Hyam says Council has negotiated an in-principle agreement with State Water to secure a long-term tenure of the park, essential to any long-term investment.

"Survey works are also under way to enable subdivision of a portion of the land that will form the area to be leased," she says. "When a final draft lease is received, it will be reported to Council for consideration."

The Master Plan for Lake St Clair Park is available to view on Council's website www.singleton.nsw.gov.au



World coal demand forecast to exceed 9 billion tonnes by 2019

The International Energy Agency's (IEA) Medium-Term Coal Market Report 2014 forecasts growth and dynamism of international coal markets.

In 2013, coal added more primary energy globally than any other fuel, closing the gap with oil. The IEA projects that an additional 1 billion tonnes of coal will be consumed in 2019 compared with today, crossing the 9 billion-tonne threshold.

The shift in the international seaborne coal trade to the Pacific Basin will continue, with Australia and Indonesia accounting for most of the incremental increase in exports.

IEA Executive Director Maria van der Hoeven observes that the shift in the world's economic centre of gravity towards Asia 'is most obvious for coal'.

The growth of coal demand in China in 2013 (196 million tonnes) was actually larger than growth in the rest of the world (188 million tonnes). In the same year, China imported 341 million tonnes of coal, the largest amount ever imported in a single year.

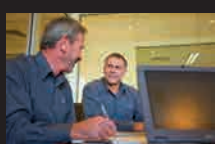
Further, the IEA does not expect Chinese coal demand to peak in the next five years, affirming instead that 'China will be the coal giant for many years in the future'. While the pace of Chinese coal demand will moderate, China's projected growth to 2019 – nearly half a billion tonnes – will be larger than current European consumption. The IEA also states that economic growth in China needs more energy than nuclear, gas, oil and renewables can supply. Investments in new coal generation capacity and coal gasification plants will support growing coal consumption. Moreover, the IEA notes that the Chinese Government is pursuing complementary measures to improve air quality, including the establishment of large coal bases linked to big cities through ultra-high voltage lines, and the installation of cleaning equipment in coal power plants.

Over the next five years, India is expected to become the second-largest consumer of coal, surpassing the United States, and the second-largest importer of coal, close to China. India will also become the world's largest importer of thermal coal.

The IEA argues that the ongoing growth of world coal demand makes the continued deployment of low-emissions coal technologies critical. In particular, the IEA calls for the 'radical acceleration' of high-efficiency, low emissions (HELE) coal-fired power plants and carbon capture and storage (CCS). The IEA welcomes Canada's Boundary Dam project, which is the first large-scale CCS power plant to commence operation.



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PAC recommendation for continued mining at Mount Thorley Warkworth

The New South Wales Planning Assessment Commission has recommended that approval can be given to continue mining at Mount Thorley Warkworth, subject to strict environmental conditions.

The Planning Assessment Commission found that the Mount Thorley and Warkworth Continuation projects are consistent with government policy and legislation, and that the benefits of allowing mining to continue outweigh impacts.

Mount Thorley Warkworth general manager Mark Rodgers said "This is a very encouraging outcome and a vital step towards securing a strong future for Mount Thorley Warkworth mine, which provides work for 1300 people and supports hundreds of Hunter Valley businesses and community groups.

"We will need to thoroughly review the Planning Assessment Commission's report, to understand what this means for Mount Thorley Warkworth.

"I would like to thank the more than 2000 people and businesses who have made submissions supporting a strong future for Mount Thorley Warkworth.

"Mount Thorley Warkworth has been part of the Singleton community for 30 years and we are seeking to continue mining on land owned by the mine and within existing mining leases.

"Coal output from the mine, which supplies high quality coal on long-term contracts to Japan, would remain at around 12 million tonnes a year if mining is permitted to continue.

"We will be paying particular attention to the Planning Assessment Commission's findings regarding the community of Bulga and we have already been acting on one of its key recommendations, by offering voluntary acquisition to those

residents who were granted acquisition rights under the Warkworth Extension 2012 planning approval.

"We are committed to working with community members to ensure there is a strong future for the village."

The Planning Assessment Commission's report will now be considered by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, ahead of any determination of the Development Consent.

NSW Government buys back CSG licences

The NSW Government has bought back two large coal seam gas exploration licenses which include parts of the Hunter.

The Petroleum Exploration Licences (PELs) were held by Pangaea and covered more than 1 million hectares.

Resources Minister Anthony Roberts said the buyback scheme was part of the government's gas plan which includes reducing the land covered by CSG titles from 60% of the state to 15%. The government is offering up a one-off buy-back scheme that will compensate title holders for surrendering their licences.

NSW Mining Beyond 2015

Fixing the NSW Planning System, better infrastructure for mining communities and greater protection from illegal access safety risks headline the NSW Minerals Council plan to strengthen NSW mining beyond 2015, launched in the lead up to the state election.

The plan outlines the policy priorities needed to ensure mining is able to deliver jobs in Sydney and across NSW, as well as deliver for the state economy and regional communities.

"This plan provides a clear policy direction for whoever



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governs NSW after the March election and the message is clear - if you hurt Mining, you hurt NSW," NSW Minerals Council CEO, Stephen Galilee said today.

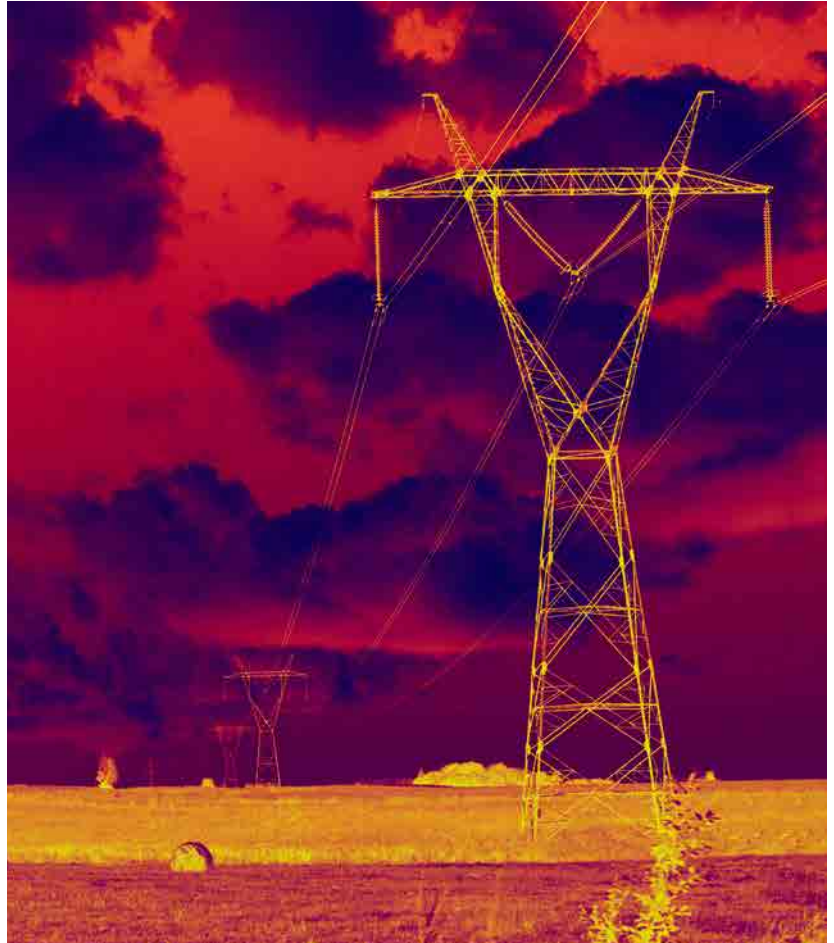
"The top priority is to fix the broken NSW planning system and restore confidence in NSW as a place to invest. This will help reverse the job losses we've seen in mining over the last two years - over 4,500 across the state."

"Fixing the planning system must include streamlining the process and shortening assessment timeframes, including for modifications. It must also include reform of the PAC process, and returning democratic accountability by restoring Ministerial decision making on State Significant Development," Mr Galilee said.

"We've had a commitment from the Premier that the planning system will be fixed, and some progress is being made, but there's much more to do. We also need a commitment from Labor to ensure a bipartisan approach that puts the long term interests of NSW first," Mr Galilee said.

NSW Mining is also calling for stronger protection from the safety risks posed by the illegal access of mine sites by extreme anti-mining protesters.

Other measures outlined in the NSW Minerals Council's election plan include policies that support mining exploration, and the expansion of the Resources for Regions program to ensure more mining communities are eligible to apply for funding.



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1. National Institute of Clinical Studies Influenza, 'Flu Facts' 2008.



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German scientists dug 50 metres underground and discovered small pieces of copper. After studying these pieces for a long time, Germany announced that the ancient Germans 25,000 years ago had a nationwide telephone network.

Naturally, the British government was not that easily impressed. They ordered their own scientists to dig even deeper. 100 metres down, they found small pieces of glass, and they soon announced that the ancient Brits 35,000 years ago already had a nationwide fibre net.

Irish scientists dug 50, 100 and 200 metres underground, but found absolutely nothing. They concluded that the ancient Irish 55,000 years ago had cellular telephones.

The computer in my high school classroom recently started acting up. After watching me struggle with it, one of my students took over. "Your hard drive crashed," he said.

I called the computer services office and explained, "My computer is down. The hard drive crashed."

"We can't just send people down on your say-so. How do you know that's the problem?"

"A student told me," I answered.

"We'll send someone over right away."

A young policeman from the Drug Investigation Unit stopped at a farm and stomped up to the old farmer, flashed his badge and said "I need to inspect your farm for illegally grown drugs. See this badge it means I can look anywhere."

The farmer said, "OK, but you won't find anything illegal here. Our family has been

"Yes, whatever. I will be the judge of that," said the policeman while flashing his badge in front of the farmer's nose.

"That's fine but don't go to the south paddock until I have the chance to"

"Don't tell me what I can and cannot do!" interrupted the young investigator. "This badge here means I can look anywhere! Don't you understand that old man!"

The policeman headed straight for the south paddock.

Moments later the farmer heard loud screams, he looked up and saw the policeman running for his life, being chased by a giant bull. With every step the bull was gaining ground on the officer who was clearly terrified.

The old farmer threw down his tools, ran as fast as he could to the fence, and yelled at the top of his lungs "Show him your badge son. Show him your badge!"

A blonde and her husband are sleeping when the neighbour's dog starts barking and wakes them up.

The blonde sighs, shakes her fist and says 'Wait until you see what I'm going to do to those neighbours!'

She runs out of the house and five minutes later she comes back with a smile on her face.

The husband asks "So, what did you do?"

The blonde says "Well, I took the dog from their yard and I put it in our yard to see how they like it having the neighbour's dog barking all night."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Business has only two functions - marketing and innovation."

- Milan Kundera

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