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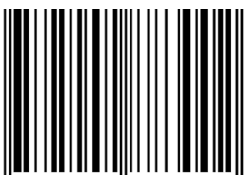
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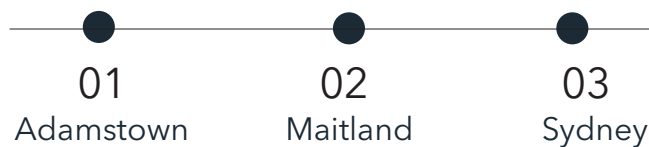
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ABN: 15 112 838 945

PO Box 853, Hamilton NSW 2303
Phone: (02) 4062 8133

PUBLISHER and EDITOR:

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

ART DIRECTOR:

Sandie Collie
sandie@HBRmag.com.au

CONTENT MANAGER:

Jason Duncan
jason@HBRmag.com.au

PRINTING:

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

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2026-27 Hunter Business Function Guide

See this year's function guide between pages 14 and 15 of this issue

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From the Editor



The issue of skills has again been highlighted in recent weeks. This is a vitally important subject for businesses and one that needs to be continually readdressed for the economy to reach its potential, particularly in challenging economic conditions.

We read with interest the release of the fifth Business NSW Workforce Skills Survey which indicated that 74% of NSW employers reported considerable difficulty finding the skilled labour they require. Of these 80% said that this

meant increased workload for existing staff and 6% feared that their business may not survive if this shortage continued.

Locally, Business Hunter reported that the situation is slightly worse in the Hunter, with 75.4% of businesses reporting skills shortages. This is not as high as the 89.1% reported in 2022 following COVID but markedly higher than the 54.3% reported in 2019 and 33.3% reported in 2017.

Particularly in today's unpredictable economic and technology environments, skilled migration remains a vital short-term fix for labour shortages.

The topic of migration is currently a subject of much debated at the moment. It is hoped that decisions on skilled labour remain firmly footed on economic criteria and not on short term political expediency.

At the other end, the latest NAPLAN results show some worrying results in basic skills of school children. Around a third are not meeting expectations in literacy and numeracy.

Many students currently at school will work in jobs that currently do not even exist.

Education and training for these jobs is a massive challenge but must be based on strong fundamentals and skills that are highly adaptable.

Training and education is certainly facing challenges that have not been faced in earlier generations.

It is clear that a continued concerted effort is required at all levels of government and business to attack Australia's skills shortage, with a mix of short medium- and long-term measures to ensure economic growth for Australia.

Garry Hardie
Editor & Publisher

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Redcape Hotel Group acquires nearly \$500 million of hotel assets

In a transaction that redefines the scale and ambition of Australia's hospitality sector, MA Financial's Redcape Hotel Group has acquired a premium portfolio of hotels from Iris Capital in a deal seeing nearly \$500 million of assets changing hands, marking it the largest freehold going concern hotel transaction in Australian history.

The landmark deal, brokered exclusively by JLL's National Hotels & Hospitality operatives, John Musca and Ben McDonald, represents a decisive vote of confidence in the Hunter's economic transformation, driven by population growth, infrastructure investment, and the expanding Newcastle Airport catchment.

Unlike traditional passive hotel real estate or REIT platforms structured around long-term lease arrangements, this acquisition comprises operating businesses underpinned by freehold property ownership - a fundamentally different investment proposition that underscores Redcape's conviction in active hospitality management and value creation.

The portfolio encompasses seven established Hunter Region hotels including the 104-room QT Hotel Newcastle, delivering a diversified mix of food, beverage, accommodation, gaming and entertainment offerings across the region's most dynamic growth corridors. Two Sydney-based hotels also form part of the overall deal.

Redcape's acquisition goes beyond bricks and mortar. Several assets carry substantial approved development applications for residential projects, including the Gunyah Hotel (114 apartments approved) and Sydney Junction Hotel (272 apartments approved), positioning the group to participate directly in the region's housing delivery pipeline.



QT Hotel

The Hotel Elmore acquisition is particularly strategic, located adjacent to the recently announced major Elmore Shopping Centre redevelopment anchored by Woolworths - a project that will reshape the retail landscape of Lake Macquarie and drive significant foot traffic to surrounding hospitality venues.

"We're excited about these pubs - they're diversified, resilient, and underpinned by material real estate holdings. They will continue to benefit from growth in the region and our investment in them," said Redcape Managing Director, Chris Unger.

"This transaction continues our strategy to diversify our portfolio through long term growth opportunities, boosting its resilience and outlook as a result."

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Jobs and investment from mining land reuse

The NSW and Federal Governments and Muswellbrook and Lake Macquarie councils are working together to secure the future of the Hunter, with new plans set to unlock more than 7,000 jobs as part of the region's shift from coal into a major industrial hub.

The first major post-mining land transformations plans at the Mt Arthur Coal Mine site near Muswellbrook and the Macquarie Coal Complex at West Wallsend have been revealed on 14 July delivering on the Commonwealth Government's \$5 million investment, alongside in-kind support from the NSW Government.

These sites will be repurposed to create new jobs and industrial precincts that drive economic growth across the region.

The draft master plans and rezoning proposals are now on public exhibition. They map out how the Hunter's skilled workforce combined with the proximity of strong rail, road, power and water infrastructure lay the foundation for the success of new industries including renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and warehousing.

The plans set out how the Mt Arthur and Macquarie coal mining areas will be transformed from supplying coal to providing new job opportunities as part of a post-mining land use trial.

Following the commercial decision by BHP to cease mining operations at their Mt Arthur coal mine in 2030, two areas will be zoned for new industry with access to major highways and the existing rail loop. Key features of the draft master plan and rezoning proposal include: total area of 5,400 hectares, over 950 hectares of land in the two priority areas identified for early activation, and approximately 5,900 new jobs.

The Macquarie Coal Complex, located just 20 km south-west of Newcastle, is ideally positioned to become a major employment

precinct for renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and warehousing. Macquarie Coal Complex is a former mine site and is directly linked to the M1 and the Main Northern Railway. Key features of the draft master plan and rezoning proposal include: total area of 1,160 hectares, at least 500 hectares of developable land, up to 1,130 new jobs, and around 36 hectares of new open space

A recommendations report will be handed down based on these pilot projects by the end of the year, setting out a clear reform agenda to streamline future post-mining land use opportunities.

Muswellbrook Hospital Redevelopment reaches another milestone

The Muswellbrook community is one step closer to benefiting from a new Community Health space at Muswellbrook Hospital, with construction now complete.

The new space is being delivered as part of the NSW Government's \$45 million Muswellbrook Redevelopment Stage 3, which will provide modern and contemporary areas to support the healthcare needs of the community.

The space will provide a wide range of services, including nursing care, child and family health care, and allied health services, all tailored to individual needs.

Located within Muswellbrook Hospital, the new Community Health space features contemporary consultation and treatment spaces, improving access to services and strengthening referral pathways to other hospital services for patients and staff.

In the coming weeks, Community Health services will relocate from the Wiedmann Wing at the existing site to the new area. Services will continue to operate throughout the move to ensure patients continue to receive the care they need.

The milestone builds on the recent completion of the new operating theatres suite, delivered as part of the redevelopment which opened in early 2026. Construction of a new sterilisation department is expected to commence in 2027.

Vile & Vile Solicitors joins Evans & Wislang

Evans & Wislang has announced that Vile & Vile Solicitors has joined the Evans & Wislang team, bringing with them 40 years of legal experience and a well-earned reputation across the Hunter region.

As part of this move, Evans & Wislang are operating a new office in Maitland — adding to their existing presence in Adamstown and Sydney. It means more local expertise, more support for clients, and more depth across every matter they handle.

Andrew Vile and his team strengthen what Evans & Wislang can offer, and their local knowledge of Maitland and the surrounding area is a genuine asset for every client they serve.

Evans & Wislang said they will offer the same values and the same commitment to clients, now with three offices and four decades of extra experience.

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REGISTRATION & APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN

This year's Hunter Manufacturing Awards theme, **"We Make It Here"**, celebrates excellence in manufacturing across our region.

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Four Walls Commercial turns 20

Four Walls Commercial opened its doors in Newcastle in 2006. Twenty years on, it is still independently owned and operated, still run out of the Hunter, and still doing what it set out to do — sell, lease and manage commercial property for people who expect to be dealt with straight.

Plenty has changed in two decades. The Hunter's industrial corridor has gone from an afterthought to one of the tightest markets on the east coast. Newcastle's CBD has been rebuilt around it. Well-located warehousing now leases quickly, and often quietly. Owners who bought a shed in Rutherford or Beresfield fifteen years ago are holding a very different asset today.

What hasn't changed is how the agency works. Four Walls remains a small specialist team — commercial, retail and industrial sales and leasing, alongside a dedicated asset management arm for owners who would rather not think about their properties day to day. Most of its business still arrives the way it always has: someone the team has looked after tells someone else.

"Twenty years is a long time in this industry and we've been through a few cycles," says Director Bobby Suminoski, who has more than 30 years in the Newcastle commercial market.

"What I'm proudest of isn't the deal count. It's that a lot of the owners who trusted us early on are still with us. You don't get that from being the biggest. You get it from turning up and doing what you said you'd do."

That local knowledge is the practical part of the offer. Where a tenant is likely to come from. Which precinct is moving. What a property will realistically achieve, rather than what an owner hopes it might. It is the kind of judgement that takes twenty years in one market to build, and it cannot be imported. It is also why a landlord will call about one property and stay for the next three.



Four Walls Commercial services Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the Hunter, centrally located in Kotara.

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Celebrating 140 Years of Varley

On 1 August 1886, George Henry Varley opened the doors of a small engineering workshop in Newcastle. One hundred and forty years later, the business he founded continues to thrive, built on the same determination, ingenuity and commitment to customers that have guided it from the beginning.

Reaching 140 years in operation is an achievement few organisations can claim. It represents generations of effort, skill and belief from the people who have contributed to the Varley story over more than a century.

What began as a business supporting Newcastle's maritime industry has evolved significantly through the decades. Today, Varley comprises four divisions and 11 subsidiary businesses supporting customers across Defence, Vehicles, Services and Systems.

Throughout its history, Varley has adapted to meet the changing needs of its customers. This practical, solutions-focused approach

has helped the business remain relevant while preserving the values established in 1886.

To mark the anniversary, Varley Group opened its Tomago site on 1 August, bringing together colleagues, family and friends. The day provided an opportunity to connect, share memories and recognise the people, relationships and achievements that have shaped the organisation.

The milestone honours an extraordinary past while also looking to the future. Varley remains focused on supporting customers, strengthening Australian capability and creating new opportunities for the years ahead.

As the organisation celebrates 140 years, it does so with gratitude for those who built its legacy and confidence in those who will carry it forward.

Built in Newcastle. Trusted for 140 Years.



CELEBRATING
140 YEARS

Built in Newcastle. Trusted for 140 Years.

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

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

That spirit continues today across four divisions, 11 subsidiary businesses and the generations of people who help shape the future of Varley Group.

Celebrating 140 Years, 1886-2026.

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2026 Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards

A locally grown healthcare organisation making waves across the Hunter Region has been named Lake Macquarie's Business of the Year for 2026.

ATUNE Health Centres, which provides integrated healthcare under one roof, took out the top gong at the Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards at Belmont 16s.

Established in 2006, the company also won the Excellence in Large Business award, and its Operations Manager Maria McIntyre won the Outstanding Employee prize.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Adam Shultz said ATUNE brought together medical, allied health, psychological and complementary health services to make healthcare more accessible and coordinated for locals.

"ATUNE's focus on accessible healthcare, health education, specialist services and local jobs makes a real difference for thousands of residents each year," he said.

Mayor Adam congratulated all finalists and winners, selected by a panel of judges from more than 160 entries.

"Lake Macquarie is home to more than 15,000 businesses operating across a remarkable range of industries," he said.

"Our finalists distinguished themselves through innovation, leadership and service, and they reflect the strength of our city's drive to support local jobs and economic growth."

Awaba Mountain Bike Park, managed by Hunter Mountain Bike Association (HMBA), won this year's Outstanding Visitor Experience category, attracting more than 20,000 riders of all ages and abilities annually.

The park is one of the oldest of its type in NSW and is run largely by volunteers.

Health service providers featured prominently in this year's winners list, reflecting the changing face of business in Lake Macquarie.

Health care and social assistance is now the single largest employment sector in the city and one of the fastest-growing, accounting for almost 20 per cent of total employment.

Other winners from within the sector included A Growing Understanding Speech Pathology (Excellence in Medium Business and Outstanding Business Leader), Dental Folk (Outstanding Young Business Leader) and Survivor's R Us Incorporated (Outstanding Community Organisation).

Belmont Hospital's 'Aussie Aunties' program, which connects international medical graduates with local hospital volunteers to help them navigate Australian culture and everyday life, took out this year's coveted People's Choice Award.

The Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards are supported by Dantia, Origin Energy, the Newcastle Herald, University of Newcastle, Charlestown Square by the GPT Group, Lake Mac Holiday Parks, and Ramsay Health Care.

2026 Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards winners

CATEGORY

Outstanding Employee

Outstanding Young Business Leader

Outstanding Business Leader

Employer of Choice

Excellence in Innovation

Excellence in Sustainability

Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion

Outstanding Community Organisation

Outstanding Visitor Experience

Outstanding New Business

Excellence in Micro Business (0- 5 Employees)

Excellence in Small Business (6-20 Employees)

Excellence in Medium Business (21-99 Employees)

Excellence in Large Business (100+ Employees)

People's Choice

Business of the Year

WINNER

Maria McIntyre - ATUNE Health Centres

Quyen Nguyen - Dental Folk

Lauren Haskins - A Growing Understanding Speech Pathology

Spectrum Comms

Catalina Motel Lake Macquarie

Glendale City Centre

Flying Colours Education

Survivor's R Us Incorporated

Awaba Mountain Bike Park – Hunter Mountain Bike Association

Strata Tech Solutions

psyborg

Eyecare Plus Belmont

A Growing Understanding Speech Pathology

ATUNE Health Centres

Aussie Aunties – UHA Belmont Hospital

ATUNE Health Centres





Lake Macquarie design studio psyborg has won Excellence in Micro Business at the 2026 Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards, marking the fourth time the Caves Beach-based business has received the award.

Founded by Daniel Borg in 2006, psyborg has evolved from a branding, web design and digital marketing studio into an AI-enabled creative, education and business systems company. The studio now delivers brand strategy, logo design, website design and development, SEO-focused content, digital marketing, social media, video production, merchandise and AI-enabled business solutions.

The 2026 award recognised psyborg's continued evolution across creativity, innovation, systems and community impact. Over the past year, the business has focused on increasing operational efficiency, expanding AI-led services and deepening its contribution to the Lake Macquarie region.

psyborg has now delivered more than 3,800 projects, worked with more than 445 clients and recorded more than 31,700 design hours across two decades of creative work.

"Winning this award for the fourth time is incredibly humbling.

For us, it's not just recognition for the work we've done, but recognition for the way psyborg® keeps evolving. We've spent 20 years building brands, websites and creative systems. Now we're helping businesses understand AI, improve their workflows and prepare for real change," said Daniel Borg, Founder and Creative Director of psyborg.

A major part of psyborg's recent evolution has been its work in AI education and strategy. The studio has delivered AI workshops and presentations for Business Hunter, NSW Government, HCAA and the Wagga Wagga AI Masterclass for Small Business Month 2025, helping organisations understand AI in practical and human-centred ways.

psyborg has also expanded its services through AI Brand Engine and AI Business Optimisation, helping clients clarify positioning, scale content and improve workflows.

Internally, the studio is developing Cortex, a new business management system built with Claude Cowork. Cortex transforms 20 years of psyborg systems, spreadsheets, timesheets, analytics and operational knowledge into an online application designed to improve visibility across project performance, quoting, productivity, capacity and decision-making.

Cortex is also being prepared for agentic workflows, where AI can help trigger, guide and automate business processes such as project setup, task reminders, performance analysis, reporting and decision support.

Alongside its AI work, psyborg continues to contribute to the local economy through client projects, community initiatives, sponsorships and business networking. Part mind. Part machine.

psyborg's philosophy, part mind | part machine, continues to guide its work. The phrase reflects the studio's blend of human insight, creative judgement, technology, automation and data.

The full story behind psyborg's fourth win can be read here: <https://www.psyborg.com.au/awards/psyborg-wins-excellence-in-micro-business-for-the-fourth-time/>

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Swing Factory breaks ground

Swing Factory has entered an exciting new phase of its national growth strategy, with construction now underway at its Maitland venue.

Located on the former Tom's Golf Range site, the multi-million-dollar redevelopment will deliver a state-of-the-art golf and entertainment destination to the Hunter Region, combining world-leading golf technology, premium hospitality offerings and family-friendly experiences.

The commencement of construction follows months of planning and design work and represents the next chapter in Swing Factory's vision to create Australia's first nationwide network of modern golf entertainment venues.

Expected to open in mid-2027, Swing Factory Maitland will feature 26 all-weather driving range bays equipped with Toptracer Range technology, an 18-hole architect-designed mini golf course, a modern clubhouse, food and beverage facilities, event spaces and a range of experiences designed to appeal to golfers and non-golfers alike.

Swing Factory continues to build momentum nationally, with successful venues operating at Terrey Hills in Sydney and Morack Public Golf in Melbourne. The company is also progressing developments in Moreton Bay, Port Kembla, Southern Sydney and Greater Melbourne, with seven sites now secured as it works towards creating Australia's first nationwide network of modern golf entertainment destinations.



Upper Hunter to host first NSW trial of smart intersection safety technology

Drivers in the Upper Hunter will soon be part of a trial of smart highway technology designed to make one of the most dangerous driving manoeuvres – turning into a busy highway – safer for all motorists.

The Rural Intersection Speed Zone (RISZ) system – the first of its kind to be trialled in NSW – will soon be switched on at the intersection of Ulan Road and the Golden Highway near Cassilis, between Merriwa and Dunedoo.

Using radar, the system detects vehicles approaching the intersection on Ulan Road and temporarily lowers the speed limit on the Golden Highway using Variable Speed Limit Signs. The reduced speed creates safer gaps in traffic, giving drivers more time to react and allowing vehicles entering the highway—particularly larger, slower-moving vehicles—to merge more safely before the speed limit returns to normal.

Designed specifically for rural intersections, RISZ aims to reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes while avoiding the need for permanent speed reductions on high-speed roads.

The fully self-contained, solar-powered system combines vehicle detection, Variable Speed Limit Signs, communications and remote monitoring technology in a single unit managed through a centralised control system.

The technology was designed and built by Transport for NSW's Operational Technology Infrastructure team at Yennora in Western Sydney.

While similar systems are used in Victoria, this is the first trial of its kind in NSW. The trial will start in early August and will run for 12 months.

The trial is part of the Smarter Highways initiative, which is delivering innovative technologies to improve the safety, reliability and resilience of the NSW highway network.

Contractor awarded for 450-bed student accommodation at Callaghan Campus

The University of Newcastle has moved a step closer to delivering more affordable housing for students, appointing Hansen Yuncken as principal contractor for a new 450-bed accommodation development at Callaghan Campus.

The eight-storey building, designed to achieve a 5-star Green Star rating, will provide a mix of single studios and shared living clusters to suit different need and budgets.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said the project would deliver significant benefits for students.

"At a time when rental affordability is a real challenge, this development is about more than beds - it's about providing safe, supportive and affordable living options so more students can fully participate in university life," said Professor Zelinsky.

"We know that where students live can have a profound impact on their university experience. Our data shows that students who live on campus are more likely to stay engaged with their studies and achieve stronger academic outcomes."

University of Newcastle data shows that students who live on campus are 10% more likely to remain in their studies (86.8% v 76.9%) and also more likely to pass their course load (89.8% vs 87.8%).

The engagement of Hansen Yuncken, who are also delivering the University's City Student Accommodation, follows the approval of the Regionally Significant Development Application in April 2026.

Designed by Lyons Architects, the new student accommodation is expected to open to students in Semester 2, 2028.

Maxwell Mine officially opens

More than 400 direct, ongoing jobs are being supported in the Upper Hunter, as the Maxwell Underground Mine officially opened on 9 July.

The mine, which is operated by Malabar Resources, was approved by the NSW Independent Planning Commission in 2020.

This milestone marks the transition to long-term production, with around 430 permanent jobs confirmed, and a workforce drawn largely from communities across the Hunter.

At least 75% of the coal produced at Maxwell will be suitable for steelmaking. That steel is critical to building homes, schools, hospitals, roads, railways, renewable energy assets and major infrastructure projects.

The NSW Government says it supports the Maxwell Underground Mine and recognises Malabar's investment as a strong vote of confidence in the Hunter, its skilled workforce and its future.

Mining in NSW supports more than 30,000 direct jobs across the state, and it remains one of the state's largest export industries, with the Hunter at the heart of that success.

The opening comes as the Government continues to implement Coal Industry 2026-2050, which provides a long-term vision for the sector and recognises the enduring contribution coal mining makes to jobs, regional communities and the state's economy. The plan acknowledges that coal will continue to play an important role in NSW for decades to come, while giving workers, communities and industry greater certainty about the future and supporting continued investment in mining regions.

■ A TRUE STORY FROM A LOCAL ADVERTISER

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Newcastle Art Gallery announces return of \$50,000 Kilgour Prize

One of Australia's major art prizes is calling for entries for the first time in five years after being relaunched following the expansion of the Newcastle Art Gallery.

The prestigious Kilgour Prize awards \$50,000 to the most outstanding work of figurative or portrait painting and attracted a record number of entries from across Australia when it was last held in 2021.

Newcastle Art Gallery Director Laurretta Morton OAM said this was a milestone moment for the prize, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

"Newcastle Art Gallery has been proud to administer the Kilgour Prize since it was established in 2006 following a bequest from artist Jack Noel Kilgour," Ms Morton said.

"Since then, it has become a well-respected and coveted inclusion on the national art prize calendar, attracting an incredibly high calibre of entries from emerging and established artists across the country.

"The prize has been on hold since the Gallery closed at the start of 2022 to undergo our major expansion project.

"We are thrilled that, as part of our reopening year, we are able to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this nationally significant art prize."

Almost 2,900 works have been entered into the Kilgour Prize since it was established, including a record 476 paintings received from across every state and territory in Australia in 2021.

In addition to the \$50,000 first prize, a further \$5,000 is awarded to the work of art voted most popular by the general public.

The Kilgour Prize features a strong resume of past winners including renowned British-born Australian artist Nicholas Harding, who took out the inaugural competition in 2006.

His winning entry, *Beach life* (pink zinc and figures), 2006, is among the Newcastle Art Gallery collection works currently on display in the Iconic Loved Unexpected exhibition.

The 2018 prize was awarded to one of Australia's most exciting emerging artists of the time, Natasha Walsh, whose Kilgour victory was among three prestigious art awards she captured over a period of 12 weeks.

A string of former Archibald Prize winners and finalists have also claimed the Kilgour crown including Sydney-based artist Blak Douglas (2019), former Newcastle art teacher and Mambo artist Michael Bell (2020) and Newcastle painter Peter Gardiner (2016).

Entries for the 2027 Kilgour Prize are open now until 5 October 2026, with finalists to be announced in December.

Joining Newcastle Art Gallery Director Laurretta Morton OAM on the judging panel will be independent curator and Warumungu and Luritja woman Kelli Cole and renowned artist Jason Phu.

The winner will be revealed at the exhibition opening in April.

Muswellbrook Bypass taking shape

The \$381 million Muswellbrook Bypass is powering forward with early work well underway and a refined design to deliver safer journeys, faster freight movements and better outcomes for the local community.

The Australian Government is investing \$304.8 million and the NSW Government \$76.2 million to deliver the transformative New England Highway upgrade.

The bypass will reshape travel through the Upper Hunter by diverting around 2,500 heavy vehicles a day away from Muswellbrook's town centre, creating safer roads, more reliable freight movements and a more connected community.

Every day, around 20,000 vehicles travel through the heart of Muswellbrook. Once complete, the bypass will provide a free-flowing 100 km/h alternative route for through traffic, cutting congestion, improving travel time reliability for freight operators and reducing conflicts between heavy vehicles, local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists.

The project's refined design delivers a safer, more resilient and more efficient road network.

Key refinements include:

- a safer intersection at Milpera Drive
- improved northern and southern connections
- better local road access
- a dedicated U-turn facility on the New England Highway north of the project.

The updated design also reduces flooding impacts, improves traffic movements and minimises property acquisition.

The project is expected to provide a significant boost to the regional economy, supporting about 720 jobs during construction.

Early works are progressing across the project, with the Aboriginal cultural heritage salvage program, undertaken in consultation with the local Aboriginal community, completed in late 2025. Utility relocation work is underway, and dynamic compaction work is now progressing on a section of the alignment crossing a backfilled open-cut mine ahead of major construction.

Completing this work ahead of the main construction contract will help reduce project risk and minimise potential delays during construction.

The project is also moving closer to major construction, with shortlisted applicants progressed to the Request for Tender stage.

The project has been fast tracked with main construction expected to start in 2027.

Dedicated veteran healthcare announces Newcastle Outpost

With nearly half of ex-serving Australian Defence Force members (45%) living with at least one chronic health condition, and cardiovascular disease, mental health conditions and musculoskeletal disorders among the most common¹, veteran health remains a significant national health priority. Increasing access to their services nationwide, Total Veteran Healthcare is officially opening its new Newcastle Outpost, providing coordinated, continuous and service-aware healthcare for veterans across the Hunter region.

Research shows that three in five (60%) of previous Australian Defence Force (ADF) members live with long-term, complex health conditions¹, highlighting the need for healthcare models that recognise the unique and often multifaceted impacts of military service. In response, Total Veteran Healthcare is focused on providing accessible, locally delivered healthcare that brings together a range of services in one location, helping veterans navigate care more seamlessly.

The Newcastle Outpost marks another important milestone in Total Veteran Healthcare's growing national network of Outposts, continuing the organisation's expansion to improve access to integrated, veteran-focused healthcare across Australia.

Located within H+ Consulting Suites at Level 1, Suite 2, 15 Lambton Road, Broadmeadow, the Outpost provides veterans with access to coordinated care. Through service-aware GPs and nurses, patients can access primary, allied and specialist healthcare services, including mental health, pain management and DVA Claim medical reports, either in person or via telehealth where clinically appropriate.

Services available through the Newcastle Outpost include GP care for veterans, DVA healthcare, chronic pain management, mental health support, coordinated care planning, DVA claim support through medical reports, assessments and specialist referrals, fast access to more than 20 healthcare services across the Total Veteran Healthcare network, face-to-face appointments, and telehealth consultations where clinically appropriate and approved by DVA.

¹ <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>



2026-27 HUNTER BUSINESS

FUNCTION GUIDE

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



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

PUBLISHER and EDITOR:

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

ART DIRECTOR:

Sandie Collie
sandie@HBRmag.com.au

CONTENT MANAGER:

Jason Duncan
jason@HBRmag.com.au

PRINTING:

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

www.HBRmag.com.au



GARRY



SANDIE



JASON

Welcome to the **2026–27 Hunter Business Function Guide**, an annual special coverage by HBR to help business people with planning and running a successful event in the Hunter region.

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

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

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

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

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

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FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE

Venues	Location	Room Capacity					Facilities	Onsite activities	Accom. rooms	See page
		Conference rooms	Max Area/M²	Max Cocktail	Max Theatre	Max Banquet				
Amanda's on the Edge	Pokolbin	2	N/A	45	N/A	N/A	In house catering	Restaurant	N/A	18
Anchorage Hotel & Spa	Port Stephens	7	144	160	160	110	AV equipment, screens, whiteboard, flip chart, sounds system and WiFi	Spa treatments at on-site Spa Lucca, cocktail masterclasses, whisky tastings, high tea by the sea, sailing experience, The Galley Kitchen – all-day dining, Moby's Bar – Bar, onsite parking, two pools, one adults-only, poolside bar	80	2
Crystalbrook Kingsley	Newcastle	5	403	170	150	150	Microphone, WiFi, Lectern, screens & HDMI connections	Restaurant, bar and Gym (5min walk- offsite).	95	16
Fort Scratchley Historic Site	Newcastle	1	246	200	150	140	On-site parking, in-house catering, dancefloor, data projector, screen, flipchart, WiFi, whiteboard, lectern and wired microphone.	A contemporary business events venue with panoramic ocean views, flexible spaces, tailored catering and exceptional service. Fort Scratchley Function Centre offers a distinctive setting for any meeting, conference or corporate event.	N/A	9
HIA Home Inspirations	Mayfield West	3	N/A	N/A	80	N/A	Data projector unit, Microphones, audio, video conferencing (Board room only), WiFi & catering	N/A	N/A	12
Maitland Town Hall	Maitland	8	460	300	380	300	All events held within the Maitland Town Hall Main Hall utilising any audio/visual/lighting equipment, will need to work directly with Councils preferred inducted contractor being Scion Audio and Events.	N/A	N/A	3



Venue with a bar, food and an activity that will actually be fun for me and my team.

Skip searching & BOOK NOW  **RIPPIT GOLF**

FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE

Venues	Location	Room Capacity					Facilities	Onsite activities	Accom. rooms	See page
		Conference rooms	Max Area/M²	Max Cocktail	Max Theatre	Max Banquet				
Mercure Charlestown	Charlestown	3	120	120	60	90	Data Projector, whiteboard, wireless internet, Smart TV in Madison Function Room.	Fully functioning onsite restaurant, Madison Kitchen and Bar, Full hot buffet breakfast 7 days, located in Madison Dining Room, barista coffee available all day outdoor pool and sun loungers	54	17
Murrook Culture Centre	Williamstown	3	502	600	420	240	3 data projectors and motorised screens, In-room sound system with wireless microphones, Wi-Fi, whiteboards, flip charts, lectern, tea and coffee station in each function room, catering packages available, ample carpark	Cultural Workshops & Training, Sand Dune Adventures Quad Bike tours, Cultural Services, Murrook Café, Cultural Gallery and Interactive Experience Centre, Retail, Parklands.	N/A	8
Muswellbrook Race Club	Muswellbrook	5	N/A	300	200	200	AV, projector and screen, 7 tv's and all of the above. High end in house catering and gardens	Race days activities	N/A	13
Newcastle City Hall	Newcastle	7	382	500	805	300	Accessible rooms (x7); in-house catering, data projector, screen, flipchart, Wi-Fi, whiteboard, lectern and wired microphone; notepads, pens, mints, still and sparkling water all included.	Experience the grandeur of an iconic heritage venue, with seven versatile function rooms for over 800 guests, regionally inspired catering, exceptional service and over 2,000 hotel rooms within a 10-minute walk.	N/A	9
Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club	Newcastle	5	N/A	300	200	300	Microphone, 65"+ TVs, lecterns, onsite catering, tea+coffee station, wireless internet.	Learn to Sail opportunities	N/A	11
Newcastle Racecourse	Broadmeadow	12	2240	1800	1500	750	Onsite catering by in-house chefs, Over 900 complimentary car parks, PA, sound & data projection systems, WiFi access, Handheld microphones, projector screens, TV monitors, disabled access & equipment-friendly entries, All rooms fully air-conditioned & most with natural lighting, Event supervisor & standard, note pads, pens, iced water.	Race Day hospitality packages, Beautifully maintained outdoor lawns for breakout sessions, Scenic backdrops for photos and outdoor events, flexible, partitionable spaces for tailored experiences, Support from a dedicated Events Team from planning to execution	N/A	15

EVENTS & Conferences



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FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE

Venues	Location	Room Capacity					Facilities	Onsite activities	Accom. rooms	See page
		Conference rooms	Max Area/M²	Max Cocktail	Max Theatre	Max Banquet				
Nioka Steakhouse	Newcastle	2	N/A	150	N/A	100	Flexible menu options: plated, shared or canapé, beverage inclusions: welcome drinks, cocktail pairings, bottomless packages, Styling access: bring in your own os let us coordinate, Audio & music options (for full hire events only) and access to waterfront outdoor areas	Restaurant	N/A	8
Oaks Cypress Lakes Resort	Pokolbin	11	800	800	672	470	Wireless internet included, event stationary & meeting notes onsite parking, digital Venue signage, all AV available through 3rd party provider at additional costs.	Lawn games, 3rd party suppliers for onsite, activities at additional costs, 3 x pools, bistro, restaurant, spa, wellness and gym	135	12
Pacific Dunes - Greenhouse	Medowie	1	270	180	200	144	Full integrated data projector, drop down projector screen, 4 roaming microphones, mic stand, wifi internet, lectern, iphone / HDMI / PC / mac / connectors etc, white board, flip chart, black out blinds, free onsite parking, accessible amenities, covered terrace for break in the kitchen garden, tea & coffee station and catering all available.	Greenhouse - Restaurant & Bar 18 hole championship golf course with practice facilities, fully stocked golf shop, outdoor bar terrace, kids play area, Thursday night trivia, Sunday live music	N/A	5
Wallsend Diggers	Wallsend	4	600	400	350	300	Cordless microphone, built-in data projectors, complimentary Wi-Fi, lectern, whiteboard	Lawn games, 3rd party suppliers for onsite, activities at additional costs, 3 x pools, bistro, restaurant, spa, wellness and gym	48	7

SUPPORTING SERVICES & TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

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

COMPANY	SERVICES	PAGE
Hunter Adventure Centre	Team Building	18
Pukara Estate	Premium gift packs and hampers designed to work across a wide range of business and event settings	10
Rippit Golf	Business meetings or team-building sessions	4
Scion Audio & Events	Audio, visual, staging & event equipment	6



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TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR NEXT EVENT A SUCCESS

It can be an arduous task to organise a successful event, particularly if it is large. The disappointing aspect for the organiser is that most attendees probably have no comprehension of how much work has been involved. Those without function organising experience often think it is just a matter of booking a venue and sending out the invitations. The organisers are often not really thought about unless there is a really big wow factor or if something major goes wrong.

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

GETTING HELP

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

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




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NEWCASTLE'S FINEST VENUES AWAIT

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INITIAL PLANNING

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

It is usually best if you can allocate some of the budget for unforeseen expenses as these often occur.

You should monitor your budget along the way to make sure there is no nasty surprises at the end.

DATE AND VENUE

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

When selecting the venue consider:

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

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

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

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

RISK MANAGEMENT

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

MATERIAL/GIFTS FOR ATTENDEES

Depending upon the nature of the event, you may wish to provide hard copy material, promo items or other gifts for attendees to help promote your business or to thank clients.

If the event is an exhibition, you may also wish to provide material from sponsors or exhibitors. An exhibition guide is handy for attendees to see who is exhibiting and to provide information and contact details they may wish to use after the event. Depending upon the size of the event and how much literature and items will be available, you may also wish to provide attendees with a carry bag which can also be branded.

TIMELINE

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

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

AT THE EVENT

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

AFTER THE EVENT

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



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ORGANISING A WORK SOCIAL DAY

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

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

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

DECIDE ON OBJECTIVES AND A BUDGET

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

SELECT AN ACTIVITY SUITABLE FOR YOUR WHOLE TEAM

If you have less active members, it is not a great idea to organise anything too strenuous. Don't select an activity that is likely to

have an extreme range in abilities. Don't let the activity be overly competitive – you can have winners if you want, but make sure that others don't feel like losers. Also not everyone drinks alcohol or feels comfortable around people who are drinking.

PICK A CONVENIENT TIME

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

EASE WORK PRESSURES

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

CONSIDER HELP

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

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DON'T FORGET TRAVEL TIME

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

PROVIDE FOOD

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

DON'T MAKE IT ABOUT THE BUSINESS

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

ENCOURAGE STAFF TO MIX

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

GET POST-EVENT FEEDBACK

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

MAJOR FACILITIES UPGRADE AT MUSWELLBROOK RACING CLUB

Established in 1862, the Muswellbrook Race Club is one of the oldest racing clubs in Australia with the newest facilities.

The building was completed in March 2026 and has state of the art conference facilities, two marble bars and an industrial size kitchen and in house catering.

With the capacity to hold 240 guests upstairs, the Silks Centre is wall-to-wall glass and overlooks the finish line.

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NEWCASTLE RACECOURSE CREATES SPACES FOR EVERY OCCASION

Over the past few years, Newcastle Racecourse has evolved beyond its traditional role as the Hunter region's home of thoroughbred racing.

While race days remain at the heart of the venue's identity, Newcastle Racecourse has become a versatile events destination, attracting everything from conferences and trade expos to food festivals, community fairs, charity luncheons and networking events.

Newcastle Racecourse Chief Executive Officer Duane Dowell says the growth of the venue's non-race day offering is a natural extension of its facilities and commitment to the wider community.

"Newcastle Racecourse has always been one of the Hunter's most recognisable venues, but in recent years we've worked hard to showcase just how versatile the precinct can be," Mr Dowell said.

"Today we're welcoming people through our gates for far more than racing. From major expos and conferences to community festivals and fundraisers, we're creating spaces for every occasion."

With ten indoor event spaces, two permanent marquees and extensive outdoor areas, Newcastle Racecourse can host events ranging from intimate meetings of twenty guests to major gatherings of up to 10,000 people. More than 900 complimentary parking spaces, modern AV capabilities and flexible room configurations add to its appeal.

A key venue is The Glasshouse, Newcastle Racecourse's flagship exhibition space. It has hosted major events including Brickfest, Craft Alive and the CareerLinks Expo, providing a vibrant exhibition environment for exhibitors and attendees.

The Racecourse has also become a leading conference destination. A standout example was the Water Industry Operations Association of Australia (WIOA) Conference, which combined conference sessions with a comprehensive exhibition component.

"One of the biggest advantages of Newcastle Racecourse is our ability to accommodate multiple event formats within one venue," Mr Dowell said.

"Events like the WIOA Conference demonstrate how seamlessly we can deliver conferences, breakout sessions, networking opportunities and trade exhibitions all in one location."

Community-focused events have also become an important part of the non-race day calendar. The Viral Food Festival brought together food trucks, live entertainment and outdoor activations, while The Newcastle Easter Fair transformed the venue into a family-friendly destination complete with carnival rides and attractions. These events highlight the flexibility of the Racecourse's expansive outdoor spaces.

The venue is also a preferred location for charitable functions and fundraising events. Over the past twelve months, an extraordinary \$790,618 has been raised for charitable organisations through fundraising events, activations and Newcastle Racecourse's Community Sponsorship Program.

Beneficiaries have included the Mark Hughes Foundation, The Hunter Melanoma Foundation, the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation, The Samaritans, Cystic Fibrosis Newcastle, The Westpac Rescue Helicopter, Jenny's Place, Ronald McDonald House, Lake Macquarie Suicide, Hunter Food Relief, Thornton Rural Fire Brigade, Lifeline, The Cancer Council and PanKind.

Business networking has also become an important part of the Racecourse's offering. Regular networking breakfasts such as BNI bring local professionals together, showcasing the venue's suitability for seminars, presentations and networking events.

Looking ahead, the Hunter Wedding Expo is scheduled for August 2026. While the event will showcase local wedding suppliers, Newcastle Racecourse is also a wedding and reception destination thanks to its picturesque lawns, permanent marquees and flexible event facilities.

"The diversity of events we've hosted in recent years demonstrates that Newcastle Racecourse is much more than a racecourse," Mr Dowell said.

"Our team takes pride in helping organisations bring their events to life, and we're excited to continue welcoming new events, new audiences and new opportunities to the venue."

From expos and conferences to festivals, fundraisers and networking events, Newcastle Racecourse has firmly established itself as one of the Hunter's most diverse event destinations, with a future that extends well beyond the finish line.

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FIVE WAYS TO HOST A MORE SUSTAINABLE EVENT

Sustainability is no longer a nice-to-have. Increasingly, it's becoming a consideration in how organisations choose venues, engage suppliers and measure the success of meetings and events.

The good news? Hosting a more sustainable event doesn't require a complete rethink. It starts with a few smarter decisions, and choosing a venue that's already doing much of the heavy lifting.

At Crystalbrook Kingsley, Responsible Luxury is more than a philosophy. It's embedded throughout the hotel, making it easier for event organisers to create conferences and corporate gatherings that deliver meaningful experiences while reducing their environmental impact.

1. Choose a venue that's already doing the work

The most sustainable event isn't created through a single initiative. It's the result of hundreds of thoughtful decisions made behind the scenes.

At Crystalbrook Kingsley, sustainability is integrated into daily operations through initiatives including EarthCheck Silver certification, digital guest communications, refillable water bottles, the reduction of single-use plastics and furniture crafted from recycled soft plastics. Choosing a venue that has already invested in sustainable practices means your event starts on the right foot before the first delegate arrives.

2. Put local produce on the agenda

A conference menu can tell the story of a destination. Working with local farmers, fishermen, winemakers and producers not only supports regional businesses but also reduces food miles and showcases the best of the Hunter. Seasonal menus are inherently more sustainable, while thoughtful forecasting and menu planning help minimise food waste without compromising the dining experience.

3. Cut waste, not quality

Some of the simplest sustainability wins come from eliminating unnecessary waste.

Digital event programs, QR codes and online registrations dramatically reduce paper consumption, while technology-enabled meeting spaces make printed handouts largely redundant. Even event gifting can be reimagined, with reusable products, locally crafted gifts or charitable donations replacing



items that often end up forgotten or discarded. Small changes, implemented consistently, can have a significant collective impact.

4. Leave delegates with a stronger connection to place

Sustainable events shouldn't be confined to the meeting room. Encouraging delegates to experience Newcastle on foot, discover local galleries, explore the harbour or connect with Indigenous cultural experiences helps support the local economy while creating richer, more memorable itineraries. A centrally located venue also reduces reliance on transport, making it easier for delegates to experience more while travelling less.

5. Measure impact, not just attendance

Successful events are increasingly measured by more than delegate numbers.

Tracking outcomes such as food waste, local supplier engagement, paper savings and sustainability initiatives provides valuable insights for future events and helps organisations demonstrate meaningful progress towards their ESG goals.

It's a simple step that transforms sustainability from a good intention into measurable action.

Meet more mindfully

At Crystalbrook Kingsley, we believe great events should leave a lasting impression, not a lasting footprint. From locally inspired dining and thoughtful waste management to responsible design and meaningful community partnerships, sustainability is woven into every event we host, allowing organisers to focus on creating memorable experiences while we take care of the details.

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ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE

We have all been to business functions that failed to engage the audience. They were too long or just plain boring and had attendees watching the clock or even making excuses to leave early.

When organising a business event you can fall into the trap of putting so much effort into the purpose of the event and the logistics that you forget about the most important people, the attendees – keeping them engaged and providing them with a positive experience.

Each event is different, but the following tips should be remembered when you plan an event:

Always keep attendees in mind – The event may well have some very serious messages to get across but to ensure the audience remains engaged you must organise the event from their point of view. This may sound blatantly obvious but is still often forgotten and must be one of the key aspects of organising.

Make attendees feel welcome – Upon arrival, it should be clear where attendees should go. If applicable, signs or welcoming people should direct attendees. Upon arrival at the room or location there should be people welcoming them. Light refreshments are often good at this stage.

Run on time – Businesspeople are busy people. The last thing you want is to make them feel like they are wasting time waiting for an event to commence or stressed because the event is running overtime and clashing with other activities on their schedule.

Networking time at the start is often useful for some attendees but you should be upfront with the attendees about any networking time and the commencement of the more official parts of the event.

Keep presentations short and sharp – The reality is that most attendees to a business event are not interested in the very fine details of your organisation or the same message repeated by multiple presenters.

Keep speeches short and to the point, focusing on the key points, but with an open invitation for attendees to obtain additional information. It is also often well worthwhile to have some printed information available, particularly if media representatives are present. For awards ceremonies consider if every recipient really needs an acceptance speech and ensure that any acceptance speeches are short.

Entertain attendees – The event may well have a very serious purpose but you need to entertain the attendees. This provides them with a more positive overall experience and can keep them in a more receptive frame of mind for your message. Sometimes event organisers fear that entertainment may trivialise any messages they are trying to get across but properly organised entertainment can enhance attendee receptiveness and provide them with a more positive opinion of your organisation. Entertainment may take many forms, from keynote speakers to music to comedians to magicians and much more.

Create a theme – For major events, organisers can consider creating a theme. This will make the whole experience more enjoyable and also allow attendees to join in.



Provide breaks – For longer events ensure that frequent breaks are scheduled for attendees to have a refreshment, visit toilets, talk with others, check on emails or contact the office. This also helps attendees to maintain their attention levels.

Provide attendees with a positive ending to the event – Make sure that attendees have a positive ending to the event. Ensure they are thanked and consider a small gift if applicable. Also ensure that key members of the organisation are available to meet with attendees who wish to make personal contact or have additional queries.

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MARKETING YOUR EVENT

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

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

Traditional marketing tactics

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

Social media

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

Use attendees

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

Invite major industry players

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

Market the speakers

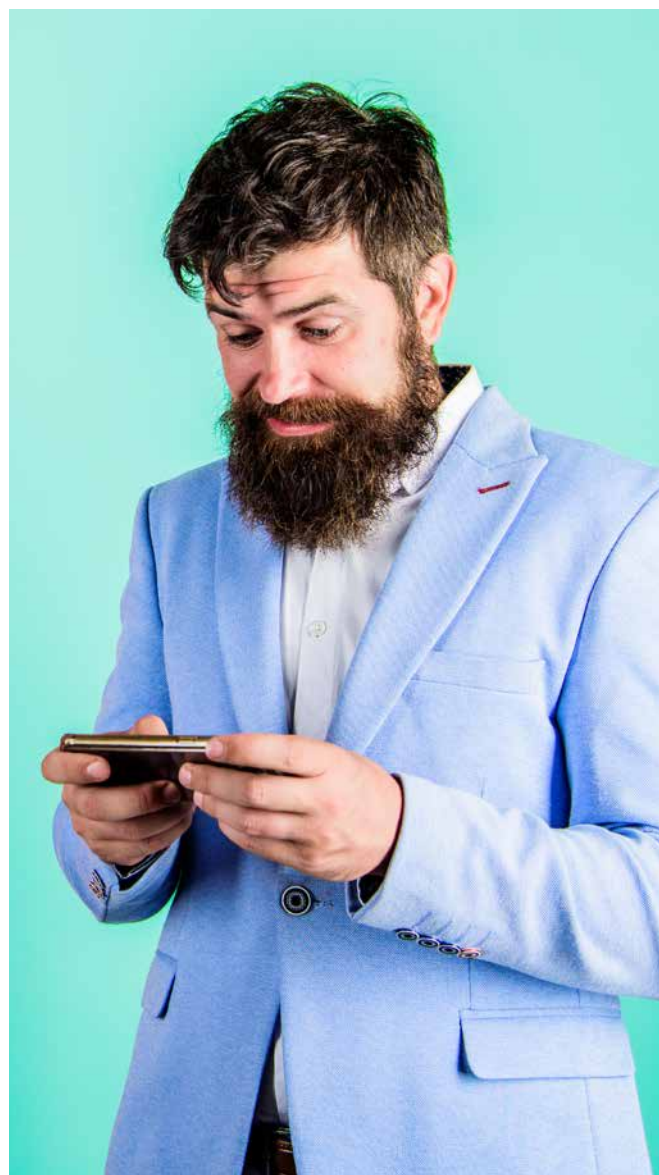
If your business has the budget to book a well-known speaker, it will create more hype. When marketing your speakers focus on their education, experience, and interesting facts about their lives. This will generate interest in hearing these facts and experiences live. Feature your speakers in your media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

Testimonials

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

Corporate sponsorships

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



Free tickets

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



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Newcastle sets sights on economic growth through tourism, events and experiences

Economic sustainability, memorable experiences, world-class events and a thriving night-time economy will take centre stage in a new strategy designed to create a more vibrant Newcastle for residents, visitors and industry.

Proposals are being invited to support the research and development of City of Newcastle's new five-year City Vibrancy Strategy.

The strategy will provide a roadmap to support business growth and sustainability, enhance the visitor economy, strengthen the city's night-time economy and unlock new opportunities for investment, business and job creation.

Lord Mayor Gavin Morris said Newcastle's evolution as a diversified economy ripe for investment, as well as an appealing events and tourism destination is building momentum, delivering a range of economic benefits.

"Newcastle has become a city that delivers the complete package, from its breathtaking beaches and thriving cultural scene to its outstanding hospitality, major events calendar and experiences that continue well into the evening," Cr Morris said.

"We're seeing increased investment attraction across a range of sectors, more visitors choosing to stay longer, travel for major events and spending more whilst enjoying everything Newcastle has to offer. That presents a significant opportunity for our local economy and businesses.

"This strategy is about making sure we harness that momentum. We want to grow visitation, encourage investment, create jobs and continue building a city that's vibrant every day of the week and at all hours of the day."

The City Vibrancy Strategy will review and consolidate City of Newcastle's Destination Management Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Night-Time Economy Strategy and Events Plan into a single, coordinated framework.

A key focus will be growing Newcastle's diversified economy, its reputation as a premium leisure destination and extending appeal to international markets on the back of Newcastle Airport's recent expansion and the introduction of new routes and connections.

It will review City of Newcastle's commitment to attracting and facilitating major events, assess the use of Council-owned venues and public spaces, identify opportunities for sustainable event growth and explore how this can increase overnight visitation.

The City Vibrancy Strategy will explore opportunities to support business growth and sustainability, investigating City of Newcastle's role in supporting the local economy, emerging sectors.

It will look to strengthen the night-time economy and investigate the feasibility of one or more Special Entertainment Precincts, including Midtown, to encourage a range of 24-hour economic activity. This responds to a notice of motion endorsed by the elected council in March 2026.

The Night-Time Economy 2026 Report, released by the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors, underpins the importance of this sector in Newcastle, where it recorded a turnover of \$2.3 billion in 2025, and accounted for 13,600 jobs across 1,027 businesses.

Hunter home building hotspots

"The Hunter region continues to demonstrate the importance of a strong pipeline of residential land and housing approvals, with thirteen local areas meeting HIA's population and residential building hotspots criteria in 2024/25," stated HIA Executive Director - Hunter, Craig Jennion.

HIA recently revealed Australia's strongest markets for home building in the 2026 edition of the HIA Population and Residential Building Hotspots Report. The Report identifies Australia's fastest-growing suburbs and regional 'hotspots' based on population growth and also indicates areas with high levels of building activity and, therefore, employment for the building industry.

The National Hotspots list is determined if an area (Statistical Area Level 2) recorded at least \$200 million in new residential building approvals in 2024/25, and its population grew faster than the national growth rate of 1.5 per cent.

The Hunter Region Hotspots list uses the same minimum population growth rate of 1.5% and a threshold in approvals of \$50 million.

Locally Branxton - Greta - Pokolbin topped the Hunter list for the third year in a row, recording 6.8% annual population growth and \$140.9 million in residential building approvals.

The largest value of residential approvals in the Hunter list was recorded in Newcastle - Cooks Hill, with \$326.9 million in approved residential building work and population growth of 2.4%. This locality was one of only two non-Sydney locations to make it onto the NSW list in the national report.

Other leading Hunter hotspots included Redhead, with 5.3% population growth and \$51 million in approvals, Thornton - Millers Forest with 4.6% growth and \$131.4 million in approvals, and Morisset - Cooranbong with 3.5% growth and \$97.8 million in approvals. On the Central Coast, Warnervale - Wadalba with 2.8% growth and \$91.4 million in approvals, was once again a hotspot.

"HIA's Hotspots Report shows that families are continuing to seek out areas where new housing supply can be delivered, including greenfield communities across the Hunter," Mr Jennion said.

"At the same time, infill markets are becoming more prominent. Areas such as Newcastle - Cooks Hill, Warners Bay - Boolaroo and Redhead show that multi-unit approvals and renewal in established suburbs are also contributing to the region's housing pipeline."

"This reflects a national trend. The HIA Population and Residential Hotspots Report 2024/25 showed the importance of greenfield sites, with 19 of the National Top 20 Hotspots located in the greenfield growth areas of Sydney, Melbourne, South East Queensland, Adelaide and Perth."

"These remain areas of strong population growth and point to the housing preference of many families for a standalone detached home."

"Infill has also been appearing more prominently, with multi-unit approvals in existing suburbs continuing to pick up. Planning changes aimed at encouraging multi-unit developments appear to be supporting this shift."

"The message for the Hunter is clear: governments need to maintain a steady supply of shovel-ready land, support infrastructure delivery and ensure planning systems can respond to demand for both detached homes and medium and higher-density housing," concluded Mr Jennion.

Hunter Region Building and Population Areas**				
**Data with in excess of \$50 million in residential building work approved in 2024/25 and with an annual population growth rate in excess of the national rate of 1.5%				
	Statistical Area Level 2	Statistical Area Level 4	Residential Building Approved, 2024/25, (\$'000)	Annual Population Growth Rate (%)
1	Branxton - Greta - Pokolbin	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	140,936	6.8
2	Redhead	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	51,029	5.3
3	Thornton - Millers Forest	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	131,458	4.6
4	Morisset - Cooranbong	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	97,821	3.5
5	Rutherford (North) - Aberglasslyn	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	162,413	3.3
6	Rutherford (South) - Telarah	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	50,051	3.1
7	Warnervale - Wadalba	Central Coast	91,463	2.8
8	Maitland	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	84,251	2.6
9	Warners Bay - Boolaroo	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	59,397	2.5
10	Newcastle - Cooks Hill	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	326,991	2.4
11	Edgeworth - Cameron Park	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	79,631	2.4
12	Kurri Kurri - Abermain	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	64,044	2.4
13	Cessnock	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	97,454	1.9

Source: HIA Economics



HUNTER TRANSMISSION PROJECT MILESTONE

In a critical milestone for NSW's energy transition the Hunter Transmission Project has been approved bringing the state another step closer to a more affordable, reliable and secure energy system for generations to come.

Importantly, about 90% of the route will be located on mining, energy and government owned land to avoid sensitive areas and reduce the number of directly affected private properties significantly from around 70 to fewer than 20 following community feedback.

The project will close a critical gap in the state's electricity network as ageing coal-fired power stations retire, making sure clean energy generated in the Central-West Orana and New England Renewable Energy Zones, can reach the homes and businesses that depend on it every day.

The approval enables construction of a new 110-kilometre, 500 kilovolt transmission line that will strengthen NSW's electricity grid, improve energy security, helping put downward pressure on electricity prices as more renewable generation comes online.

The approved transmission pathway has avoided and minimized impacts on trees and vegetation wherever possible. Importantly, it now avoids nearly all of the breeding ponds of Littlejohn's Tree Frog.

The approval is subject to strict conditions designed to protect the environment, manage construction impacts, support landowners and make sure ongoing engagement with local communities throughout delivery.

These include dedicated conditions around social impacts, biodiversity, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, and local business participation.

The project will support around 830 construction jobs, including more than 160 in the Hunter, while creating broader opportunities for local manufacturers, suppliers, transport operators and regional businesses.

Overall, the project is expected to support around 1,500 direct and indirect jobs across NSW.

EnergyCo and the preferred network operator will continue to work closely with affected landowners, communities, and stakeholders as the project progresses to construction.

Subject to Commonwealth Government approval, construction is expected to commence in late 2026 and be completed in late 2029.

MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH GRANT FOR FUNGI AND SOIL HEALTH PROJECT

The Hunter Region Botanic Gardens has been awarded a major NSW Environmental Trust Environmental Research grant of \$148,984 for an innovative project that will place the Gardens at the forefront of fungal biodiversity research, soil health science and ecological restoration in regional NSW. This project has been assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust.

The funded project, "From Fruiting Body to DNA: Building a Verified Fungal Reference Library for Sustainable Soil Management for Fungal-dependent Native Plants," will create a DNA-verified reference library of fungi found at the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens.

This is a significant achievement for HRBG and brings considerable kudos to the Gardens. It recognises that the Gardens is not only a much-loved community and visitor destination, but also a serious scientific, conservation and education institution capable of delivering research with statewide relevance.

Fungi are essential to healthy ecosystems. They support soil fertility, help native plants establish and survive, contribute to biodiversity, and play a vital role in ecosystem recovery. Yet fungi

remain one of the least understood parts of the natural environment. This project will help change that by linking visible fruiting bodies — the mushrooms and other fungi seen above ground — with DNA evidence from preserved specimens and soil samples.

The project led by HRBG Patron Emeritus Professor Tim Roberts AM will engage the Hunter community in documenting fungal biodiversity, build a DNA-verified fungal reference library, and provide practical monitoring benchmarks for land managers, educators and researchers.

The work will also have wider environmental value beyond the Botanic Gardens. The NSW Environmental Trust has specifically noted the importance of ensuring the project's outcomes are applicable beyond HRBG, including at landscape scale and in post-mining remediation works. The Trust has also asked HRBG to strengthen collaboration with the University of Newcastle and invite the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators to participate.

The project's communication plan highlights the importance of increasing public understanding of fungi in soils, biodiversity and ecosystem recovery; engaging community, government and industry stakeholders; promoting fungal benchmarks in land management and rehabilitation; and creating fungal hygiene and biosecurity protocols for volunteers, bush regenerators, local government and land managers.

ORICA BACKS AUSTRALIAN-MADE RENEWABLE HYDROGEN IN HUNTER

Australian-made renewable hydrogen has taken a major step after chemical producer Orica reached Final Investment Decision (FID) and is proceeding with its \$432 million agreement with the Federal Government to produce and use renewable hydrogen in the Hunter.

The production-based incentive is supporting Orica to install and operate a 50 MW electrolyser on Kooragang Island near Newcastle.

Orica's facility produces approximately 360,000 metric tons of ammonia per year, accounting for almost all of NSW's production capacity. The renewable hydrogen will displace 7.5% of Orica's natural gas use, delivering immediate and meaningful emissions reductions. Once commissioned, the project is expected to be amongst the largest renewable hydrogen projects operating in the southern hemisphere.

Minister for Climate Change and Energy Chris Bowen said the agreement was an important first step towards making more essential products in Australia using Australian renewable energy.

"Ammonium nitrate is critical to mining, and this project is about making these essential products here at home, using Australian-made renewable hydrogen," Minister Bowen said.

The Federal Government established Hydrogen Headstart to turn promising projects into real investment, real construction and real emissions reductions.

"Orica is the first project to reach final investment decision under the program, showing Australia's renewable hydrogen industry is moving from ambition to delivery."

"This is good for jobs and investment in the Hunter, good for Australia's energy security, and good for the farmers, miners and transport operators who depend on these products."

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PORT OF NEWCASTLE FIRST PORT IN NSW WITH BATTERY STORAGE APPROVAL

Port of Newcastle (PON) has become the first port in NSW approved to safely store grid-scale lithium-ion batteries at its Mayfield Multipurpose Terminal. This approval further strengthens the Port's position as the State's leading logistics gateway for renewable energy infrastructure, providing project owners greater flexibility in the delivery of critical energy projects.

The announcement comes as on 15 July the NSW Government approved the Stratford Pumped Hydro and Solar Project, another major milestone under the State's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. As projects like Stratford progress from planning to construction, PON is playing an increasingly important role by providing the logistics capability to safely receive, store and distribute the equipment needed to deliver them.

The approval for battery storage, granted by the NSW Government in late 2025 and following extensive collaboration with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, has already enabled PON to receive and store batteries destined for three of the State's largest battery projects – AGL's Tomago Battery, Origin Energy's Eraring Battery, and Bellambi Heights Battery Energy Storage System.

Together, these projects represent approximately 1.7 GW of dispatchable capacity and 6.8 GWh of energy storage enough stored electricity to power over one million homes for four hours during periods of peak demand.

The battery storage capability builds on PON's established role handling oversized renewable energy cargo, including wind turbine components for projects across NSW, further demonstrating the Port's unmatched capability in safely managing complex project cargo and supporting the



diversification of the State's energy supply.

Port of Newcastle CEO Craig Carmody said becoming the first port in New South Wales approved to store lithium-ion batteries was another important step in the Port's diversification strategy.

"This isn't just a milestone for Port of Newcastle – it's yet another way we're helping customers deliver the infrastructure NSW needs to support a more diverse energy mix.

"These are complex cargoes that require specialist handling, purpose-built infrastructure and the right safety systems. We've invested in that capability because we see where the market is heading and what our customers will need.

"Whether it's wind turbine components, grid-scale batteries or other major project cargo, PON has built a reputation for handling complex logistics safely, efficiently and reliably. That's why project owners continue choosing to bring this cargo through Newcastle."

Connecting local suppliers to Australia's energy future



The Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEa) is working with Hunter communities to highlight local suppliers and boost local jobs.

A new showcase helps local businesses in the Hunter and Central Coast connect with major transmission projects, so they can compete for work, create jobs and benefit from the energy transmission.

The NZEa has engaged the Industry Capability Network (ICN) to develop a Transmission Infrastructure Supplier Showcase in partnership with EnergyCo and the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

Engineering and fabrication company, Alfabs, based in Kurri Kurri, is one of many local businesses who have registered to be part of the Hunter and Central Coast showcase.

Alfabs Development Manager, David West, said they signed up to the showcase to support the transmission sector given the company's capabilities in structural steel, fabrication, machining and site

installation, all needed for major transmission projects.

'As a Hunter Valley-based business employing more than 240 people across construction and manufacturing disciplines, we have a proud history of supporting local industry and regional employment.

'We want to continue working on these major projects in our local region and believe the showcase is a great way for local suppliers to be seen and contracted to the work.'

By using the showcase to engage local suppliers, the broader Hunter and Central Coast economies can benefit from the transmission rollout.

Find out more at nzea.gov.au/hunter



Australian Government



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PREPARING FOR AUSTRALIA'S SHIFT FROM EXPOSURE STANDARDS TO EXPOSURE LIMITS

The rules governing airborne contaminants are being renewed for the first time in two decades. Here's what the change involves — and why the months ahead matter.

Workplaces across Australia are approaching a milestone in how chemical exposure is regulated. The familiar Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) are being retired in favour of a refreshed framework known as the Workplace Exposure Limits for airborne contaminants (WEL). The switch takes effect on 1 December 2026, once the new list has been written into work health and safety legislation federally and in each state and territory.

More than a change of terminology, this marks the conclusion of the first thorough review of the standards since 2003. The intent was straightforward: bring the numbers into line with current scientific understanding of how chemicals affect health, and strengthen worker protection where the evidence supports it.

Why “limits” rather than “standards”?

The renaming was deliberate. Regulators wanted to remove any doubt that these figures represent a ceiling that must not be crossed, and to bring Australian terminology into step with language used overseas. A limit is not a target, and it is not negotiable.

What is actually changing?

For a large share of substances, the permissible airborne concentrations carry over unchanged. However, the review has

produced revisions for a number of chemicals, some tightened, some relaxed, and certain contaminants added or removed altogether. Every business should check each relevant substance against the new list rather than assuming its figure is unaffected.

A handful of substances remain unsettled. Nine chemicals, among them respirable crystalline silica, benzene, formaldehyde, chlorine and nitrogen dioxide, are undergoing further impact analysis before their revised figures are confirmed, and their existing WES values continue to apply until that work concludes. Separately, 33 contaminants classified as non-threshold genotoxic carcinogens, for which no exposure is considered safe, are still being assessed to determine how they should best be regulated; their current standards remain in force through the transition.

New and revised notations

The review has also refreshed the advisory notations that accompany each substance. The single sensitiser marker used previously has been divided in two: DSEN, for agents that can provoke an allergic skin reaction, and RSEN, for those that can cause hypersensitivity of the airways. Carcinogenicity markers have been dropped, on the basis that more current classification information is now available through the Hazardous Chemical Information System and safety data sheets. And a new marker, OTO, flags ototoxic substances, chemicals that can heighten the risk of hearing loss, particularly where a worker is also exposed to noise. One further practical change: once all reasonably practicable higher-order controls are in place, correctly worn respiratory protective equipment may now be considered when assessing compliance with a limit.



REGULATORY CHANGE — EFFECTIVE 1 DECEMBER 2026

WES to WEL: Is Your Workplace Ready?

From 1 December 2026, Australia's Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) will be replaced by new Workplace Exposure Limits (WEL) for airborne contaminants, the first major overhaul in more than two decades.

~700 Chemicals evaluated, over 200 WES will have a lowered WEL.

New hazard notations — DSEN, RSEN and OTO — have been introduced.

The message for employers is clear: a WEL is a limit that must not be exceeded.

If you generate dust, fumes, vapours or other airborne contaminants, now is the time to check where you stand — before the deadline, not after.

Hazmat Services can help you prepare:

- Personal and static air monitoring for dust, respirable crystalline silica, welding fume, asbestos and hazardous chemicals
- Results interpreted against both the current WES and the incoming WEL, so you know exactly where you stand
- Control review against the hierarchy of controls, with clear, practical recommendations

Established in 2007 and based in Newcastle, Hazmat Services is a specialist occupational hygiene, hazardous materials and environmental consultancy certified to ISO 45001, ISO 14001 and ISO 9001, and NATA-accredited for asbestos air monitoring.

Don't wait for December. Talk to Hazmat Services about a workplace exposure monitoring program built around your worksite.

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The window to act is now

Nothing is on hold in the meantime. Employers must keep meeting their obligations under the WES right up until 30 November 2026, then comply with the WEL from the following day. The sensible approach is to treat the transition period as preparation time.

A clear path runs through three stages. Identify the airborne contaminants present in your operations and compare each against the incoming limits. Assess whether current exposures are likely to sit within those limits, and where there is genuine uncertainty, air monitoring is the only reliable way to know. Then review and strengthen your controls, working down the hierarchy from elimination through to protective equipment.

Where Hazmat Services fits in

This is precisely the work our team handles. Established in 2007 and based in Newcastle, Hazmat Services is a specialist occupational hygiene, hazardous materials and environmental consultancy, certified to ISO 45001, ISO 14001 and ISO 9001 and NATA-accredited for asbestos air monitoring.

We measure worker exposure through personal and static air monitoring for dusts, fumes, gases, vapours and mists, including respirable dust, crystalline silica and welding fume using recognised sampling methods and NATA-accredited laboratory analysis. We interpret those results against both the current standards and the incoming limits, so you know exactly where your workplace stands, and we review your control measures against the hierarchy of controls, advising on practical improvements and any health monitoring your operations may require.

With the deadline set, the businesses that fare best will be those that assess their position early.

For further information contact Hazmat Services on (02) 4961 1887, email admin@hazmat-services.com.au or visit www.hazmat-services.com.au

NEW LIFE FOR MINE SITE AS \$1.8 BILLION PUMPED HYDRO PROJECT APPROVED

A major pumped hydro project with the potential to power up to 120,000 homes has been given the green light to transform a former mining site into a renewable energy generator in the Gloucester Valley.

The \$1.8 billion Stratford Pumped Hydro and Solar project will boost energy security and bring investment and jobs to the Hunter, with up to 350 construction jobs and 10 ongoing jobs.

This project will bring lasting benefits for the region, including around \$18.2 million over the life of the project for community and infrastructure projects through a Voluntary Planning Agreement with Mid Coast Council.

Located, about 100 kilometres north of Newcastle, the project will sit on the Stratford Mining Complex site where coal mining operations ended in 2024, providing a productive and innovative future for the post-mining land.

The project by Gloucester Coal Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Yancoal Australia Limited, includes a 300 MW pumped hydro power station with 12 hours of energy storage and a 320 MW solar farm.

To generate electricity, water will be transferred between a new upper reservoir and an existing dam via a tunnel, with water for the initial reservoir to be sourced from the existing mine site.

It will provide "firming" energy by storing surplus electricity generated during the day during and releasing it to generate electricity at peak times in the evening. It is forecast to deliver around 13% of the State's 2034 long duration storage target.

Declared Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) in

June 2024, the project is a crucial component of the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, a 20-year plan to diversify the energy generation mix, and provide energy security as NSW moves away from coal-fired power.

The coal to renewable energy evolution happening in the Hunter is also demonstrated in the Port of Newcastle.

While the Port of Newcastle remains the largest coal export port in the world, it is also now a critical gateway for renewables infrastructure. The port is the entry point for everything from wind turbines, to solar panels and battery energy storage systems to enable energy projects across the Hunter and beyond.

The NSW Government has supported this evolution by declaring part of the Port of Newcastle State Significant Infrastructure, consolidating approvals for updates to the Port which will add flexibility for future operations.

Since March 2023, the NSW Government has approved 52 renewable energy projects that, when built, will generate enough electricity to power 5.1 million homes.

There are currently more than 57 renewable energy, storage, pumped hydro and transmission projects under assessment in NSW. If approved, these 12.9 GW of generation projects could produce enough electricity to power about 6.68 million homes.

A further 107 projects, including solar, wind, battery storage and pumped hydro projects are at various stages in the planning pipeline.

24.8 MILLION INVESTMENT TO BUILD THE NSW CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE

The federal and NSW Governments are investing almost \$25 million to expand clean energy training facilities and grow the vocational education and training workforce needed to support New South Wales' energy transition.

The joint investment includes:

- \$16.7 million to upgrade and expand training facilities at six TAFE NSW campuses; and
- \$8.1 million to strengthen the capability and capacity of teachers, trainers and assessors delivering clean energy training across NSW.

The new facilities will help meet growing demand for electricians and clean energy-aligned trades, while supporting students to train closer to home.

There are six training facility upgrades being delivered across NSW, including Campbelltown, Cessnock, Dubbo, Tamworth, Wellington and Wyong.

On top of new and upgraded training facilities, the investment will strengthen the workforce responsible for delivering clean energy training across NSW.

The \$8.1 million workforce package includes:

- scholarships to help businesses build workplace training and assessment capability and support existing workers to become qualified workplace trainers and assessors;
- upskilling and retraining for up to 500 TAFE NSW teachers in emerging areas like solar panel installation, battery storage, hydrogen safety and electric vehicle servicing; and
- a shared teacher resourcing pilot between TAFE NSW and the NSW Department of Education to create pathways into renewable energy careers for secondary school students.

Together, these investments will ensure NSW has the facilities, training capability and workforce needed to support growing clean energy industries.





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"SECURE DESTRUCTION - GUARANTEED"

A guy approaches his doctor, panicking, saying, "You have to help me! I think I'm shrinking!"

The doctor said, "Settle down. You just have to learn to be a little patient."

The census taker knocked on Donna's door. She answered all his questions except one. She refused to tell him her age.

"But everyone tells their age to the census taker," he said.

"Did my next door neighbours, Miss Maisy Hill and Miss Daisy Hill, tell you THEIR ages?" she asked.

"Certainly," he replied.

"Well, I'm the same age as they are!" she snapped.

"As old as the Hills," he wrote on his form.

Just after the maid had been fired. She took five bucks from her purse, she threw it to Fido, the family dog.

When asked why by her former employer, she answered, "I never forget a friend. This was for helping me clean the dishes all the time!"

A travel agent looked up from his desk to see an older lady and an older gentleman peering in the shop window at the posters showing the glamorous destinations around the world. The agent had had a good week and the dejected couple looking in the window gave him a rare feeling of generosity.

He called them into his shop and said, "I know that on your pension you could never hope to have a holiday, so I am sending you off to a fabulous resort at my expense, and I won't take no for an answer."

He took them inside and asked his secretary to write two flight tickets and book a room in a five star hotel. They, as can be expected, gladly accepted, and were on their way.

About a month later the little lady came in to his shop.

"And how did you like your holiday?" he asked eagerly.

"The flight was exciting and the room was lovely," she said. "I've come to thank you. But, one thing puzzled me. Who was that old guy I had to share the room with?"

A mother took her little boy to church.

While in church the little boy said, "Mommy, I have to pee." The mother said to the little boy, "It's not appropriate to say the word 'pee' in church. So, from now on whenever you have to go just tell me that you have to 'whisper'."

The following Sunday, the little boy went to church with his father and during the service said to his father, "Daddy, I have to whisper."

The father looked at him and said, "Okay, why don't you whisper in my ear."

The new guy asks his cellmate what's going on.

Well," says the older prisoner, "we've all been in this here prison for so long, we all know the same jokes. So we just yell out the number instead of saying the whole joke."

So the new guy walks up to the bars and yells, "Number eighty nine!" This time the whole cell block rocks with the loudest laughter, prisoners rolling on the floor laughing hysterically.

When the guffaws die down, the bewildered new guy turns to the older prisoner and asks, "How come you guys were laughing so hard this time?"

"Oh," says the older man wiping tears from his eyes, "we'd never heard that one before."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"When you innovate, you've got to be prepared for people telling you that you are nuts" - Larry Ellison



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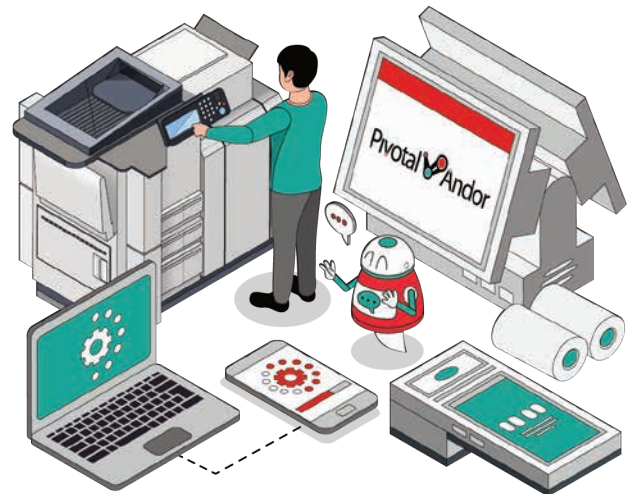
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