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From the Editor



The announcement of the new Defence Delivery Agency is a step forward for Australia's defence and represents new opportunities for local business.

The Agency is designed to deliver the capabilities, skills and workforce required to meet the strategic defence needs for Australia.

It will integrate three existing Defence capability delivery groups: Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group; Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group; and Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group. The agency

will report directly to Ministers and have control over its budget, enabling coordinated and holistic delivery of defence capability and growing the sovereign defence industrial base.

The global political environment is more unsettled than it has for many decades and is quickly changing. Conflicts such as the Ukraine war, the continuing rise of China and more volatile politics in the US are contributing to a rethink of our defence needs.

Australia is faced with the prospect of having to be more self-reliant in terms of its defence and to react more quickly to changing needs in terms of the global environment and new technology.

Kevin Rudd is quoted as saying that new defence technology across the three AUKUS nations (Australia, UK and USA) took

about 12 years to "get in the hands of a war fighter", as opposed to about two years in China.

Australia has had major increases in defence spending in recent years but it is obvious that we also need to work smarter if we are to meet our sovereign defence needs.

The Defence industry is of course a major part of the Hunter economy and is providing great opportunities for many local businesses.

The defence industry has an extremely diverse range of needs and local businesses should investigate the opportunities available.

Many think it is all too hard or that their business is too small. The truth is that defence has an extremely wide range of suppliers, both in terms of the goods or services provided and business size.

Although it does require some work to be a defence supplier, the opportunities are immense.

We wish all our readers, advertisers and article providers best wishes for the festive season and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

We look forward to continuing to serve the Hunter business community in 2026.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

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KONGSBERG DEFENCE AUSTRALIA OFFICIALLY OPENS NEWCASTLE OFFICE

Kongsberg Defence Australia has officially opened its Newcastle office, marking another major milestone for the company. The new premises will accommodate Kongsberg Defence Australia's expanding local workforce, which has more than doubled this year.

The Newcastle office forms part of KONGSBERG's broader investment in the Hunter Region, including the establishment of a state-of-the-art missile manufacturing and maintenance facility at the Astra Aerolab precinct near Newcastle Airport, Kongsberg's first missile factory outside Norway.

The move follows the Commonwealth of Australia's commitment for the local missile manufacture and maintenance of the KONGSBERG Naval Strike Missile (NSM) and Joint Strike Missile (JSM), creating over 500 jobs during the construction and establishment phase of the program, and injecting more than \$100 million into the Hunter's local economy.

Once completed and operational, this factory will commence production in 2027 and will significantly expand KONGSBERG's capacity in Australia, creating 100 highly skilled jobs and strengthening Australia's sovereign defence capability.

"The opening of our Newcastle office is another tangible step towards KONGSBERG delivering upon its commitments as a Strategic Partner to the Commonwealth's Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Enterprise. We are investing in people and partnerships to ensure that KONGSBERG's proven technology can be manufactured and maintained right here in the Hunter, for the Australian Defence Force," said John Fry, Managing Director, Kongsberg Defence Australia.



The new office will serve as a base during the construction of the Kongsberg Missile Factory, supporting Kongsberg Defence Australia's growing local engineering, supply chain and project teams.

"Newcastle and the Hunter region is at the heart of Australia's future defence manufacturing capability. We have partnered with local developer Greater Newcastle Aerotropolis Pty Ltd, EJE Architects and Multiplex, who in turn bring many local companies to support construction and delivery of this facility, creating lasting benefits for the region," said Josh Scanlon, Kongsberg Defence Australia's recently appointed Director Operations – Kongsberg Missile Factory.



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LOVEDALE FARM TO OFFER PREMIUM GOLF IN AUSTRALIA

Lovedale Farm is poised to place the Hunter Valley on the world golfing stage, with Australian Golf Digest drawing rare comparisons between the development and New Zealand's globally acclaimed Jacks Point, widely regarded as one of the world's finest courses.

Set among vineyards, rolling hills and the Hunter's world-renowned food and wine, Lovedale Farm is emerging as Australia's next iconic luxury golf destination, where world class-sport meets world-class indulgence.

Golf participation in Australia reached 3.8 million adults in 2023/24, a nine per-cent annual increase, underscoring the rising demand for premium golfing experiences. Lovedale Farm will deliver a course designed to match the world's best.

"Lovedale Farm brings together international level design, natural beauty and the Hunter Valley lifestyle in a way that feels truly special," said Jim Hunter, Managing Director of Capital Corporation. "The region has always been known for its wine. Now it is becoming one of the world's most exciting destinations for golf and luxury travel."

Just two hours from Sydney, the Hunter Valley is experiencing strong growth as a premium leisure destination. Lovedale Farm will soon join Greg Norman's The Vintage and Cypress Lakes championship course to establish the region as one of the country's most compelling golf precincts.

With the region's visitor economy projected to reach \$1 billion annually by 2030, Lovedale Farm is set to play a significant role in elevating the Hunter's global profile.

Stuart Fraser, CEO of Golf NSW, said Lovedale Farm is a milestone project for the state.

"Lovedale Farm has all the hallmarks of a world class golf destination. The landscape, ambition and setting combine to create something golfers will travel far to experience. It is an exciting addition to the NSW premium golf offering."

Mr Fraser added that the project signals a new era for golf tourism in the state.

"New South Wales has some of the most beautiful golfing landscapes in the world, and Lovedale Farm further elevates that reputation. It will attract visitors who are not only passionate about the game, but who want an exceptional lifestyle experience that reflects the very best of regional Australia."

Designed as more than a course, Lovedale Farm will be an immersive luxury precinct, blending championship level golf with the Hunter's signature wine, food and natural beauty.

Construction of the 18-hole championship course begins in March 2026, with completion expected in 2028. A display suite is now open at Hunter Valley Gardens, showcasing the masterplan and championship course model.

NEW PLAN SETS STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR LAKE MACQUARIE'S FUTURE GROWTH

Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement 2025-2045, which sets out a 20-year vision for land-use in the city, has been approved.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Adam Shultz said the planning statement was crucial given the city's forecast to increase by more than 38,000 people by 2046.

"As the population grows, it's important to plan for infrastructure to support the changing housing, education, health and transport needs for the community," Mayor Adam said.

Most of the growth is driven by migration from Newcastle and Sydney areas, with greater Morisset forecast to experience the largest increase in population over the coming decades.

"The plan outlines eight key priorities to guide Lake Macquarie's growth and evolution across social, economic and environmental areas."

Priorities include supporting new industries and jobs, providing diverse housing options, protecting biodiversity, planning for climate risks, enhancing open spaces, advocacy to improve public transport connections, and helping people to walk and cycle safely throughout the city.

"Our two regionally significant growth areas, which are north-west Lake Macquarie and Greater Morisset in the southwest will be a major focus."

"A key planning action for the North West Growth Area is to transition former mining land between Cockle Creek and the M1 into areas that support future employment, tourism, recreation and some new housing opportunities."

"While Morisset is planned to emerge as a regionally significant centre supporting diverse businesses and services with commercial, mixed use and residential development."

The adoption of the planning statement follows public exhibition which saw 45 submissions.

Council also adopted the Youth Strategy 2025-2029 following public exhibition.


The policy aims to ensure the needs of the city's 34,000 young people, aged 12-24, are recognised and supported.

"The strategy is so important as it outlines initiatives to support young people in their transition from education to sustainable employment."


Actions of the strategy include connecting young people with services to help with the cost of living, promote council's Early Careers program, work with Local Aboriginal Land Council's to increase young people's understanding of Awabakal and Worimi land, and more.

In addition, Councillors voted to defer adopting the Flood and Tidal Inundation Policy to allow Council undertake a full review.

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SIMONE PALFREYMAN WINS ACCOUNTANT OF THE YEAR AT THE 2025 WOMEN IN FINANCE AWARDS

Palfreyman Chartered Accountants is proud to announce that its Principal, Simone Palfreyman, has been named Accountant of the Year at the 2025 Women in Finance Awards, recognising her progressive leadership style, her transformative impact on the accounting profession, and her significant contributions to the business community through her education-focused, client-first approach to service delivery. Her proactive model of year-round support, financial education, and relationship-driven advisory work has empowered countless businesses and individuals to operate with greater confidence, clarity, and resilience.

The award honours Simone's dedication to proactive, education-focused client service, her ethical and wellness-centred leadership, and her determination to inspire cultural change within the finance industry.

The Accountant of the Year category specifically honours an accounting professional who has:

- Shown outstanding client service and innovation
- Demonstrated deep technical capability
- Contributed positively to their business community
- Championed ethical practice and professional standards
- Inspired others through leadership and mentorship

Winning this award signifies excellence not only within the accounting field, but also within the broader financial services landscape – placing recipients among the most influential and forward-thinking professionals in the country.

Simone said the award reflects the values that guide her work and her firm.



“For me, great accounting is about empowering people with clarity and confidence. When we stay connected with our clients throughout the year - educating, guiding and checking in - we help them build stronger, healthier businesses,” she said.

“I believe leadership should be grounded in ethics, care and genuine respect. When we look after our people - our clients and our team - we create workplaces and business communities that are stronger, healthier and more sustainable. That’s the kind of industry I want to help build.”

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MACQUARIE COLLEGE UNVEILS INNOVATIVE NEW BUILDING

Macquarie College unveiled their new state-of-the-art facility in November. This facility represents a major milestone in the College's long-term educational investment and a symbol of the College's dedication to providing a thriving educational environment that nurtures curiosity, compassion, and confidence in each student.

Designed by PMDL Architecture and Design and built by North Construction & Building, the project was designed with flexibility and innovation at its heart. Reflecting the College's commitment to the Design Thinking educational philosophy as a teaching and learning tool, the building was purposefully designed to provide students with an environment that encourages them to think critically, solve authentic challenges, and develop the adaptability and empathy needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The facility will serve as a hub for both the school, especially the Secondary Years, and the wider community. It includes:

- Flexible classrooms that adapt to a variety of teaching and learning styles
- A 130-seat theatre for seminars, performances, and community events
- Breakout spaces to foster collaboration and independent study
- A dedicated Library designed to inspire a lifelong love of learning

Its flexible design will support collaborative projects, student wellbeing, and co-curricular activities, enhancing both academic and social outcomes. Importantly, the building strengthens Macquarie College's capacity to deliver innovative, Christ-centred learning experiences and engage with the broader community through events, seminars, and partnerships.

"The new building provides students with a place to learn, gather and connect," said Principal Gary Marsters.

"It supports our modern and innovative educational programs and embodies our goals of providing a learning environment that nurtures for today, prepares for tomorrow, and provides hope for the future."

NGM GROUP LANDS NEW HOME IN NEWCASTLE WEST

NGM Group has reaffirmed its long-term commitment to the Hunter, partnering with developer Hunter Street Properties Pty Ltd and builder Bloc for a new 9,000 sqm head office in Newcastle West.

Delivered as part of the proposed 711 Hunter Street redevelopment, subject to statutory approval, the new premises will bring all NGM Group corporate head office and Newcastle Permanent and Greater Bank contact centre teams together at one headquarters, as the organisation continues to unify its operations following the 2023 merger of the two customer-owned banks.

NGM Group Managing Director and CEO Bernadette Inglis said the new head office is a significant investment in the future of the region.

"This is an investment in our people and our organisation, and positions us well for the future," she said.

"Newcastle Permanent and Greater Bank were both born in the Hunter and have over 200 years of combined history here.

"That's an extraordinary heritage we are exceptionally proud of so when we say that the Hunter is our home, we truly mean it."

The building is being designed to support modern ways of working and opportunities for future growth, and will include a purpose built fit-out to meet NGM Group's workplace strategy.

"We've talked to our people about what they would like to see in this building, and something that has come out very strongly is a space with flexibility.

"We support hybrid working, so we will provide for that face-to-face collaboration and social connection that people seek when they work in the office. This will be equally balanced with design and technologies that accommodate virtual working too.

"As we've grown, that balance has been a challenge to accommodate in our current head office sites, so a brand-new building gives us a wonderful opportunity to construct a fit-for-purpose workplace that suits our needs."

"We're excited to work with the developer and their builder Bloc; a construction partner with an outstanding track record in Newcastle including Newcastle's largest office at 6 Stewart Ave. This project will have meaningful benefits for the local economy and bring long-term investment in Newcastle's future," said Ms Inglis.

Project Development Director and Hunter Street Properties Pty Ltd. spokesperson Gavin Edgar said the office has been designed to achieve high environmental ratings.

"In partnership with Stewart Architects, we've tailored the 14-level PCA 'A' grade office design to meet the NGM Group brief and will be designed to achieve a 5.5-star NABERS Energy and 5.0-star Greenstar rating," Mr Edgar said.

"Bloc will have a peak workforce of about 150 workers on site during construction, supporting local subcontractor and supplier businesses."

Subject to statutory approval, demolition and ground works are expected to commence in early 2026, with completion forecast for 2028. NGM Group will explore options for exiting its current corporate sites as the move to their new head office gets closer.

AI TECHNOLOGY TO HELP LIFEGUARDS KEEP SWIMMERS SAFER

City of Newcastle is leading a Hunter-first trial of AI technology to help pool lifeguards respond to potential incidents up to six times faster. CCTV cameras were installed at Wallsend Swimming Centre in November, which will be paired with cutting edge Lynxight AI technology to help monitor the 50 m, learners' and toddlers' pools.

Chair of City of Newcastle's Sports Infrastructure Working Party Cr Peta Winney-Baartz said the technology will help address safety concerns around higher attendance levels expected at the pool during the current \$2 entry fee trial.

"City of Newcastle is working in partnership with our specialist pool operator BlueFit to ensure our pools continue to meet the expectations and evolving needs of our community," Cr Winney-Baartz said.

"Adequate lifeguard coverage, security measures and crowd management strategies are essential in maintaining the safe and efficient operations of our pools, especially with higher visitor numbers predicted this summer due to the \$2 entry fee trial endorsed by the elected Council."

City of Newcastle's Executive Manager Community and Recreation Lynn Duffy lifeguards remain essential to pool supervision.

"This technology will help strengthen the prevention and rescue role played by the lifeguards, who remain essential to pool supervision," Ms Duffy said.

"It empowers them with the tools to respond faster and more effectively and has already shown its lifesaving capabilities elsewhere in Australia, with a male swimmer rescued in Perth in June after suffering a medical episode and slipping below the surface."

CATHERINE HENRY LAWYERS RECOGNISED AMONG NSW'S TOP MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE FIRMS FOR NINTH YEAR RUNNING

Newcastle law firm Catherine Henry Lawyers has again been recognised among NSW's top medical negligence firms in the 2025 Doyle's Guide, marking nine consecutive years of recognition.

The firm's health and medical law team brings more than 70 years of combined experience in both law and healthcare.

Principal Catherine Henry was again named among NSW's top medical negligence lawyers (Plaintiff), one of only three from regional NSW to appear in the top 16.

"Living in a regional or remote area shouldn't limit your access to quality healthcare or legal representation," Catherine said.

"We've built our practice to ensure people outside metropolitan centres can seek justice when things go wrong."

"For many clients, pursuing a claim is about more than compensation, it's about getting answers and helping prevent future harm," Catherine said.

The firm's health and medical law team, led by Catherine and Special Counsel Niall Connolly, an Accredited Specialist in Personal Injury Law, has extensive experience in medical negligence cases.

They are supported by Senior Associate Linda Crawford, who spent 17 years as a nurse and midwife before becoming a lawyer, and Medico-Legal Associate Dr Aman Grewal, whose dual qualifications in medicine and law are complemented by extensive experience in emergency, intensive, and pre-hospital care. Together, their diverse backgrounds enable a thorough and informed assessment of both clinical and legal issues.

"It's our team's extensive combined experience in both law and healthcare that gives us a truly unique perspective, We understand the medical context, the law, and the human impact, which allows us to resolve cases effectively, compassionately, and in a timely manner."

Catherine Henry- Principal Catherine Henry Lawyers

"It's our team's extensive combined experience in both law and healthcare that gives us a truly unique perspective," Catherine said.

"We understand the medical context, the law, and the human impact, which allows us to resolve cases effectively, compassionately, and in a timely manner"

"Through our work, we aim to improve accountability and raise standards of care across the health system—especially in regional and rural areas," she said.

The Doyle's Guide listings recognise outstanding practitioners. Catherine Henry Lawyers' ongoing inclusion alongside Sydney's largest firms reinforces their role as a trusted advocate for clients across regional and rural NSW.

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HUNTER REGION TOURISM AWARDS

The Hunter Region Tourism Organisation (HRTTO) hosted the inaugural Hunter Region Tourism Awards presentation on 3 November 2025 at Flamingos Live.

Operators from across the region gathered for an evening of celebration, connection and recognition. The atmosphere was vibrant and welcoming, with the kind of energy that only the Hunter Region can create.

Outstanding tourism and hospitality businesses were recognised across six key categories, each reflecting the depth and diversity of the Hunter visitor economy.

2025 Hunter Region Tourism Awards winners were:

- **Accommodation - Leconfield House Hunter Valley**
A gracious guest house perched above Branxton with sweeping country views, elegant heritage character and warm personalised hospitality.
- **Dining - The Italian Cottage**
A favourite for generous plates, thoughtful wine pairings and relaxed local charm that brings people together.
- **Attractions - Sculpture on the Farm Inc**
An immersive arts experience that blends large scale sculpture, village character and rolling rural hills in an unforgettable way.
- **Experiences - HV Tours (Hunter Valley Tours)**
A welcoming host that brings the region to life through small group adventures, cellar door stories and scenic drives.
- **Services - Dragonfly Cakes**
A creative partner in celebration known for beautifully crafted cakes, friendly service and meticulous attention to detail.
- **Shopping - Spotto Books**
A playful brand that helps families explore the region through interactive travel books and roadside discoveries.

The Hunter Region Tourism Awards marked the return of a dedicated regional tourism awards program after many years without a platform tailored to the Hunter. Free entry and inclusive categories encouraged businesses of all sizes to participate. The focus remained firmly on visitor experience, local pride and the stories behind each operator.

These awards helped strengthen the region by showcasing operators who go above and beyond for their guests, raising awareness of places to stay, dine, explore and shop, and encouraging collaboration and continual improvement across the visitor economy. From the coast to the countryside, the evening demonstrated the resilience and creativity of tourism and hospitality businesses across the Hunter.

Planning has already begun for the next Hunter Region Tourism Awards program and operators across Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland, Cessnock, Singleton, Dungog, Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter are encouraged to consider entering.

POWER-HUNGRY FACILITIES SET TO UNDERGO ENERGY-SAVING UPGRADES IN MAITLAND

Maitland City Council has been awarded over \$960,000 in funding from the Australian Government's Community Energy Upgrades Fund to implement electrification upgrades at the Maitland Aquatic Centre and Maitland Regional Art Gallery.

With the rest of the project's \$1.9 million cost coming from Maitland Council, the funding will allow for Maitland to take the first step towards the full electrification of two of its most energy-intensive facilities.

The gas boilers used to heat Maitland Aquatic Centre's 25m indoor pool will be replaced with a 250kW heat pump and a 100kw heat pump will replace an existing gas boiler at Maitland Regional Art Gallery, while rooftop and carpark solar and battery energy storage units are proposed to better manage electricity demand.

Maitland City Council General Manager Jeff Smith said this first suite of electrification upgrades were expected to "produce an energy cost saving of nearly \$110,000 every year."

"There's a dual benefit to moving forward with these planned upgrades," Mr Smith said.

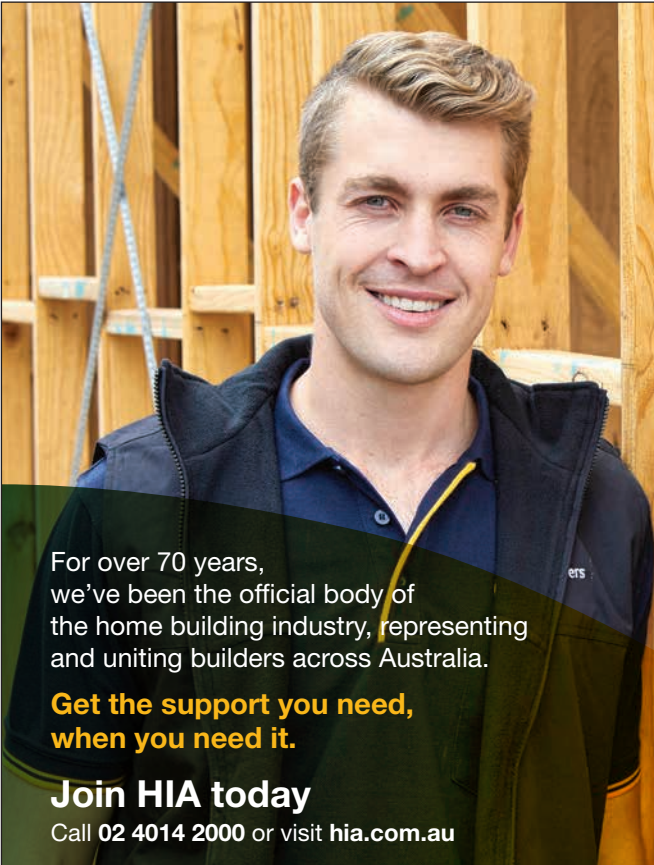
"Not only are they a prudent sustainability initiative, but an economical one too, helping Maitland Council to be environmentally and financially sustainable into the future."

"These upgrades will help future-proof our community assets by switching them to cleaner, more efficient technology, including solar and battery storage," Member for Paterson, Meryl Swanson MP said. "It's a smart investment that brings down costs and strengthens our local resilience."

"Maitland is a fast-growing, proud regional city, and I'm delighted the Albanese Government is backing these upgrades, so our community continues to thrive."

Work is expected to commence in April 2026 and be completed towards the end of 2027.

Mr Smith said the upgrades would see Maitland Council realise further emissions savings - more than 330 tonnes of CO2 each year - after already hitting its target of a 50% reduction by 2030 following the implementation of a new renewable energy contract for its facilities and streetlights earlier this year, which is already generating financial savings.



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\$30,000 WIN IN KICKSTARTER CHALLENGE

In November a Newcastle woman on a mission to tear down barriers in the beauty industry for people with disabilities has won \$30,000 in equity-free funding for her business at the Kickstarter Challenge Grand Final in Canberra.

ByStorm Beauty is the brainchild of disability worker and female founder Storm Menzies, who started the business after injuring her dominant hand in 2023 and realised she couldn't open a tube of mascara - let alone apply it.

Storm has limited function in her right hand after experiencing a stroke at birth and was confronted by "just how inaccessible the beauty world was", from hard-to-open packaging, to the application of makeup products that demand fine motor skills.

She said she realised millions of people had been "overlooked" by beauty brands and wanted to reshape industry standards "to embrace inclusivity and accessibility" - particularly those facing challenges with upper limb mobility, grip strength, or fine motor skills. So she set about crafting initial designs and prototypes for the silicone snap-on grips in her garage.

The pioneering products have already captured the attention of well-known comedian Celeste Barber, who is collaborating with ByStorm Beauty for her label Booie Beauty.

Menzies said winning the Kickstarter Challenge would help take her business to the next level, including employing people with disability to ensure the brand continues to be shaped by the community.

She entered the Kickstarter Challenge in the health, wellbeing and care economy category, and said it had reinforced her belief that inclusive design is "not a niche concept but a necessity".

The four runners-up each won \$7,500 to put toward their startups after competing in five categories:

- **Community Impact:** PlayPass - Shehara Pillai (Melbourne)
- **Education:** Elevated Educators - Lisa Cohen & Lianne Kady (Melbourne)



Storm Menzies receiving cheque

• **Environment and Sustainability:** CO2 Lab - Lindy Hua (Sydney)

• **Technology:** Superstat - Cordelia King (Melbourne)

The Kickstarter Challenge is an initiative of Enterprising ME, a program designed to support and empower Australian women aged 18+ to pursue entrepreneurship.

The Governor-General of Australia, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, delivered an address and announced the 2025 Kickstarter Challenge winner.

Enterprising ME director Fleur Anderson said initiatives such as the Kickstarter Challenge were crucial to addressing the investment drought for female entrepreneurs, and showcased their massive potential to contribute to economic growth and innovation.

The program is delivered in partnership with the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA).

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NEW INVESTMENT ATTRACTION WEBSITE FOR SINGLETON

A new website capturing the spirit of the Singleton local government area has been launched as a one-stop-shop for information for anyone looking to make a move, invest or visit Singleton.

The Singleton Hunter Valley investment attraction website was officially launched at Singleton Diggers on 14 November in the culmination of a year-long project to create a digital hub showcasing all the reasons Singleton is a great place to live, work, play and invest.

Delivered under Singleton Council's Innovation and Investment Attraction Program and funded by the NSW Government, the new website at singletonhuntervalley.com.au is also a platform for local businesses to showcase their services on a business directory and post job opportunities.

Dwight Graham, Council's Director Corporate + Community Services said the website was a significant milestone for the community and an exciting step forward in showcasing Singleton to the world.

The site includes:

- A local jobs board
- Comprehensive business directory
- Tourism directory and events calendar
- Up-to-date information and data for prospective investors and new residents.

"The purpose of the Innovation and Investment Attraction Program is to build a stronger, more resilient Singleton—one that embraces innovation, supports local enterprise, and continues to thrive well into the future," Mr Graham said.

"The Singleton Hunter Valley investment attraction website is a cornerstone of that vision. It's more than just a digital presence; it's a dynamic, interactive hub that tells the Singleton story in a way that's bold, engaging, and inclusive.

"It connects people with local jobs, shines a light on our amazing businesses, promotes our tourism experiences, and shares the data and stories that make Singleton so uniquely positioned for growth.

"Best of all, it was developed with the input of local businesses, organisations and individuals who contributed their time, insights, stories and support for this project, including many who let us come into their workplaces for filming days and photoshoots that have helped to shape something special."

Businesses can add and update their details to the business directory and post vacancies on the jobs board.

Singleton Council Director Corporate + Community Dwight Graham, Manager Community Experience + Events Nicole Rindal, Coordinator Economic Development Lisa Harpley and Manager Community Growth + Evolution Mary-Anne Crawford.



SINGLETON COUNCIL VOTED ONE OF THE BEST WORKPLACES IN AUSTRALIA

Singleton Council has again been recognised as one of Australia's best workplaces, taking out a 2025 Xref Engage Best Workplace Award following outstanding results in its latest employee engagement survey.

The prestigious national award celebrates organisations that demonstrate exceptional people management practices that foster highly engaged, high-performing teams.

Based on the results of Council's 2025 Engagement Survey, staff reported satisfaction levels 10 percentage points above the local government industry average — an achievement only a select number of organisations reach each year.

Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, Singleton Council's General Manager said the recognition was especially meaningful because it was based directly on the feedback from people within the organisation.

Mr Fitzpatrick-Barr said the result reflected the strength and diversity of Council's employees, united by a shared purpose to "create community".

The Xref Engage Best Workplace Awards are based on anonymous employee survey results, with winners required to achieve a response rate of at least 50 per cent, use 30 or more benchmarkable questions, and record an average satisfaction score of 80 per cent or higher, or at least 10 per cent above their industry benchmark.

Singleton Council General Manager Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr with staff



\$23.7 MILLION SAFETY UPGRADE ON GOLDEN HIGHWAY

The NSW Government is delivering on its election commitment to make the Golden Highway safer and more reliable, progressing a \$23.7 million upgrade at Merriwa after more than a decade of inaction from the former government.

The new westbound overtaking lane, to be built around 12 kilometres west of Merriwa, will improve safety, support freight efficiency and give road users a safer, more predictable journey across one of regional NSW's most important east-west corridors.

This \$23.7 million commitment includes \$12 million announced during the 2023 election campaign and a further \$11.7 million allocated in the 2025-26 NSW Budget.

The investment builds on the more than \$133 million jointly invested by the NSW and Australian Governments to improve the Golden Highway between Newcastle and Dubbo.

Community members are invited to provide feedback on the proposed overtaking lane location at: Merriwa@transport.nsw.gov.au.

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*[National Listener Survey - conducted by McNair Yellow Squares - Greater Newcastle 2025 Survey Wave 1].

'ACCIDENTAL' BRICKLAYER WINS INDUSTRY AWARD

A Dora Creek man who stumbled into a career as a bricklayer has just landed a major industry award, using his platform to urge young Hunter locals to consider a career 'on the tools'.

Bailey Govett, 22, was this month crowned Apprentice of the Year at the Bricklayer Contractors Australia Annual Awards at the Canada Bay Club.

A third-year apprentice with Crouch Bricklaying who studies at TAFE NSW Newcastle, Mr Govett had dreams of becoming a carpenter but fell into bricklaying after deciding his first career choice, carpentry, wasn't for him. What began as chance has become a rewarding career for Mr Govett, who is encouraging young locals to consider a career in the trades and help address a crippling local trades skills shortage.

"The construction industry will always be around and there's such a shortage of skills tradespeople here right now," he said.

"If you're a hands-on person who's not really into books and studying, a trades career is a great option that could set you up for life. It's a job that keeps you physically fit and you get to see the fruits of your labour after each day's work."

The National Bricklaying Apprenticeship Status Report revealed bricklaying apprenticeships would need to double to meet current demand, so pronounced is the industry skills shortage.

Mr Govett said the award had further fuelled his confidence to build a career in the trade.

"I couldn't believe I'd won it and it just made me feel so recognised," he said.

"My Certificate III in Bricklaying at TAFE NSW will open up other avenues for me, including potentially working as a building supervisor or in project management.

"I'd also like to open my own bricklaying business one day."

He said his TAFE NSW-training had provided a safe and supportive space for him to learn the practical skills and theory of bricklaying.

"The TAFE NSW classroom is more forgiving if you make a mistake than itf you're working on-site," Mr Govett said.

"My teacher is so experienced in the industry and has become a real mentor."

TAFE NSW Newcastle Head Teacher of Bricklaying David Lange-Smith congratulated Mr Govett on the award and joined him in urging young people to consider a rewarding career as a bricklayer.

"There is still a huge shortage of quality bricklayers and the future is very bright for Bailey," Mr Lange-Smith said.

He said the bricklaying industry was battling a stubborn skills shortage, worsened by a construction boom and an ageing workforce.

Dora Creek bricklayer Bailey Govett (middle) with (from left) TAFE NSW Newcastle head teacher of bricklaying David Lange-Smith and CEO of Brick and Block Careers, Luke Radford.



SPECIALIST ACCREDITATION FOR CLARE MCATEER

Delaney Roberts Specialist Family Lawyers has announced that Senior Associate Solicitor, Clare McAteer, has officially achieved Specialist Accreditation in Family Law, awarded by the Law Society of NSW.

This accreditation recognises Clare as a true specialist in her field and reflects her deep knowledge, skill, and commitment to helping families navigate separation with clarity and confidence.

Clare says this milestone reflects her passion for guiding clients through some of the most difficult transitions in their lives.

"Family law is an area where people need both expertise and genuine care. Being able to support clients through such a significant time — and give them practical direction and reassurance — is the reason I do this work. Achieving Specialist Accreditation is incredibly meaningful, and I'm honoured to be recognised in this way," Clare said.

Gaining Specialist Accreditation is a demanding process. Solicitors must successfully complete rigorous assessments across communication, problem-solving, client relations, court procedure, and all areas of Family Law — including peer-to-peer evaluation.

Director Anna Roberts says Clare's achievement reflects both her dedication and her talent.

"Specialist Accreditation is a respected benchmark of true expertise within the profession. Clare has worked exceptionally hard for this, and doing so on her first attempt is an outstanding accomplishment. We are incredibly proud of her — she is an exceptional Family Lawyer and this recognition is very well deserved." Anna said.

Clare McAteer



FUNDING BOOST TO SUPPORT NEWCASTLE COMMUNITIES IN NEED

Local initiatives designed to promote cultural diversity, tackle food insecurity and foster social connections have received a \$220,000 boost from City of Newcastle.

The funding pool is part of City of Newcastle's annual grants and sponsorships program, which this year is providing 87 projects with a share of almost \$900,000 across 10 funding categories.

Twenty-two Social Inclusion projects will support Newcastle's most vulnerable, with grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000 each.

Councillor Elizabeth Adamczyk, Co-chair of City of Newcastle's Access Inclusion Standing Committee, said that the funding removes barriers to inclusion and supports equal opportunity.

"City of Newcastle is proud to partner with local organisations to deliver innovative, evidence-based programs that make a real difference for people in our community who may experience additional barriers or disadvantage, such as families, refugees, people with disability, young people, and culturally diverse communities," Cr Adamczyk said.

"Our Social Strategy 2030 places people at the heart of our vision, with these grants providing a solid foundation for strengthening health, wellbeing and cultural connection to build a city where diversity is celebrated and inclusion is the norm."

Among the successful applicants is Shared World Collective, whose project will bring together culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women through artisan and small business skill development.

Shared World Collective Director Katrina Gulbrandsen said the creative workshop program will foster cultural expression and create pathways to economic participation.

"The Gather, Make & Market project delivered in partnership with Mosaic Cultural Connections, is a meaningful way to support women from African, Afghan and Arabic refugee backgrounds in Newcastle," Ms Gulbrandsen said.

"By building on existing skills in sewing and embroidery, and introducing new techniques through workshops, maker sessions and sustainable sourcing and selling tour, participants are empowered to create handmade products for sale at local markets or retail outlets like The Full Circle Collective.

"The program also includes small business training to help women turn their creativity into real economic opportunity. This program will build confidence, community connections and pathways to economic independence. It's about recognising the strengths they already have and supporting them to thrive."

A range of other grant recipients will also deliver programs for Newcastle's culturally diverse communities including the CALD Connect Foundation, whose Newcastle Multicultural Soccer Tournament will be held over four weekends in 2026 to foster inclusion, celebrate diversity and strengthen community connections through sport.

Issues around food insecurity will be addressed across a number of initiatives including a community lunch service from the Salvation Army and the Samaritan Foundation's annual Christmas Lunch in the Park event.

Creating new social networks is at the heart of several projects including Connection Club's Fast Friends events, which are designed to break down barriers to foster meaningful peer connections, build social skills and reduce isolation for people with a disability.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE EMPLOYABILITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The University of Newcastle has recognised its next generation of change-makers, from student entrepreneurs tackling waste and sustainability, as well as companies making a transformative impact on employment in the region.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alex Zelinsky, says the awards reflect the University's commitment to producing life-ready graduates who can make an impact from day one.

"These students are already at the forefront of innovation and creativity in their respective fields. Our University is proud to offer a wide range of opportunities that enable students to develop their employability skills and gain professional experience, such as Career-Ready Placements," Professor Zelinsky said.

"The awards recognise students who've not only demonstrated leadership, but also the curiosity and courage to turn their ideas into meaningful action, with over 90 students nominated this year," Professor Zelinsky said.

The awards also acknowledge the crucial role of staff and employers in creating valuable placement opportunities. Eight organisations have been inducted into the University's Hall of Fame for their ongoing support and collaboration.

Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Belinda Tynan, said industry partners play an essential role in shaping future-ready graduates.

"Our programs are designed in partnership with employers to ensure our graduates have the skills and mindset to thrive in an evolving workforce," Professor Tynan said.

The University's strong focus on employability will continue into 2026, with more than 14,000 students completing an industry placement in the past 12 months.

See the full list of winners and find out more about the awards at www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/careers/employability-excellence-awards

Winners of the Employability Excellence Awards



HIGH SPEED RAIL LINK ON TRACK FOR LAKE MAC

Infrastructure Australia has recommended prioritising the Newcastle to Sydney section of the National High Speed Rail (HSR) project in its stage three business case evaluation report, citing the region's population density and potential housing and employment benefits.

A proposed station at Lake Macquarie would be one of six in the 194 km proposal, along with Newcastle, Central Coast, Sydney Central, Parramatta and Western Sydney International Airport.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Adam Shultz said Council welcomed the proposed inclusion on the route, which aims to slash Newcastle to Sydney transit time from two hours and 35 minutes to just an hour.

"Fast, reliable rail connectivity would create economic, lifestyle and tourism opportunities for our community in line with our long-term vision for sustainable growth," he said.

"It could support local jobs, help attract investment and make it easier for local people to commute to work, school and services throughout the state."

It is hoped the proposed stop could support the continued development of Lake Macquarie's western growth corridor, a key precinct for housing, employment and innovation.

Based on the recommendation, a HSR alignment of 194km in length would allow for rail travel at a maximum of 320 kilometres per hour and 200 kilometres per hour in tunnelled sections.

The line would integrate with local and regional transport networks, station precincts and interchanges, parking, and dedicated stabling and trains facility on the Central Coast.

The proposed National HSR would ultimately connect Brisbane to Melbourne along the east coast.



UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

The University of Newcastle has announced the appointment of **Dr Paul Ebert** as the incoming Executive Director of the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER). A proud Novocastrian and alumnus of the University of Newcastle, Dr Ebert brings nearly two decades of global leadership experience in the energy, chemicals and resources sector. Most recently Dr Ebert served as Group Director Sustainability and Energy Transition Leadership at Worley, a global engineering services company with more than 50,000 employees.



HMRI

The Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) has announced **Darren Turner** as the new Chair of the Board. Darren is a widely respected company director and business leader, bringing more than 40 years of experience across accounting, governance, and strategic advisory roles. He joined the HMRI Board as a Non-Executive Director in 2021 and currently chairs the Audit and Risk Committee. A former Partner at PwC, Darren holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Newcastle, is a Fellow of Chartered Accountants ANZ and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company.



HMRI

Kristie Atkins has been appointed as Deputy Chair of the Board at The Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI). Kristie is an award-winning business growth and commercial leader with extensive experience in marketing, strategy and customer acquisition. Named Entrepreneur of the Year (B&T Women In Media) and Australasia's Certified Practising Marketer of the Year, she is Managing Director of international award-winning customer acquisition and retention business, Wink, and Chair of the Australian Marketing Institute (AMI). Kristie joined the HMRI Board as Non-Executive Director in 2022 and chairs the HMRI Foundation.



WINARCH GROUP

Blake Vanderwoude is the new Head of Winarch Live. Vanderwoude was most recently the Event Acquisition Manager at Venues NSW, where he led the acquisition and delivery of world-class events, played a key role in the operational launch of Allianz Stadium, and negotiated major commercial partnerships with global promoters and sporting bodies. Vanderwoude will lead Winarch's expanding venue portfolio, championing Australian-led cultural infrastructure and embedding Winarch Live's unique model as independent, promoter-agnostic venue specialists.



WINARCH GROUP

Adam Slattery has been appointed Head of Winarch Music. A former senior executive at Vodafone, Woolworths and American Express, Adam has a proven record in brand transformation, omni-channel growth and customer engagement. Adam will lead Winarch's growing music retail division, which includes the iconic Musos Corner in Newcastle and The Guitar Lounge in Sydney. With a deep passion for music culture and retail innovation, he will drive growth across these heritage brands.

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Still taking payments over the phone? Why this outdated practice could be costing your business millions

Phillip O'Neil
Viatek

In a world where nearly every interaction has gone digital, one crucial process still lags behind: taking credit card payments over the phone. It might feel convenient — quick, personal, and familiar — but in today's compliance landscape, it's a serious liability.

We've all been there. You're on the phone with a customer who wants to make a payment. They read out their credit card number while you type it into a payment terminal — or, in some cases, jot it down on a notepad to make sure you "get it right." It's efficient, but it's also the stuff of data-security nightmares.

What happens when that call takes place in a shared office, a café, or on public transport? Who else can hear? What happens to that notepad afterward? These small moments introduce big risks — and in 2025, those risks now carry real financial consequences.

The hidden cost of convenience

For years, businesses have accepted phone payments as a matter of practicality. It's fast, it feels personal, and customers appreciate the human touch. But the reality is that this simple process could now cost your business hundreds of thousands of dollars every month.

When card details are spoken aloud, they can be overheard, misrecorded, or even stolen. If an employee writes them down or stores them temporarily in an email or CRM system, that information is immediately at risk — and so is your compliance status.

Even the most trusted staff can make honest mistakes that expose sensitive data. And when that happens, it's not just your customer who pays. Under the Payment Card Industry's security framework, the business owner is ultimately responsible for protecting customer data.

The new compliance reality

In March 2025, the latest version of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS 4.0) became mandatory. A central principle of this update is that cardholder data must never be shared in an unsecured environment. That means reading credit card numbers aloud over the phone is no longer compliant.

Businesses that continue to accept verbal payments now face potential fines of up to \$100,000 per month from payment providers. In the event of a data breach, card companies may also take legal action or revoke merchant privileges entirely — cutting off your ability to process payments.

And the financial penalties are only part of the problem. According to industry research, 74% of consumers say they would stop doing business with a company that lost their payment data. Once customer trust is gone, it's incredibly difficult to win back — especially in competitive industries where alternatives are just a click away.

Why this matters to business leaders

For executives and business owners, the implications extend beyond IT. Non-compliance isn't just a technical issue — it's a strategic one. It signals to your customers, regulators, and partners that your organisation isn't taking data protection seriously.

In an era where data breaches dominate headlines and even the largest corporations struggle to safeguard information, smaller businesses can't afford to take chances. A single security lapse can derail growth, harm brand reputation, and create long-term financial damage.

Secure, modern alternatives

The good news is that safer, compliant solutions already exist — and they're surprisingly simple to implement. The best systems use cloud-based, dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) masking technology that allows customers to enter their card details via their phone keypad during a call.

This means:

- No numbers are spoken aloud
- No tones are recorded
- No sensitive data ever touches your systems

The result is a secure, PCI-compliant payment process that gives your customers peace of mind while protecting your business from financial and reputational harm.

The time to act is now

Although the PCI DSS 4.0 compliance deadline has passed, there's still time to get ahead before regulators — or worse, fraudsters — catch up. Every day that outdated payment processes remain in place increases your exposure.

Start by requesting a PCI Risk Assessment from a trusted Unified Communications partner, such as Viatek. These assessments provide a report outlining vulnerabilities in your current payment systems, as well as recommendations on how to improve your overall communications platform.

The message is clear: if your organisation is still taking card details verbally over the phone, now is the time to change. The risk is no longer theoretical — it's financial, legal, and reputational.

Because in today's business landscape, one phone call could cost far more than just the sale.

For further information contact Viatek on 1300 842 835, email philip.o'neill@viatek.com.au or visit www.viatek.com.au

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Businesses still taking payments over the phone risk fines, breach, lost trust, and non-compliance. **Protect your customer data** with a secure **compliant** way to take payments without hearing or recording card details. Start your PCI DSS 4.0 Risk Assessment - scan the QR code.



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Silencing the dust: NSW's strict new rules on silica exposure

Andrew Russell
Hazmat Services

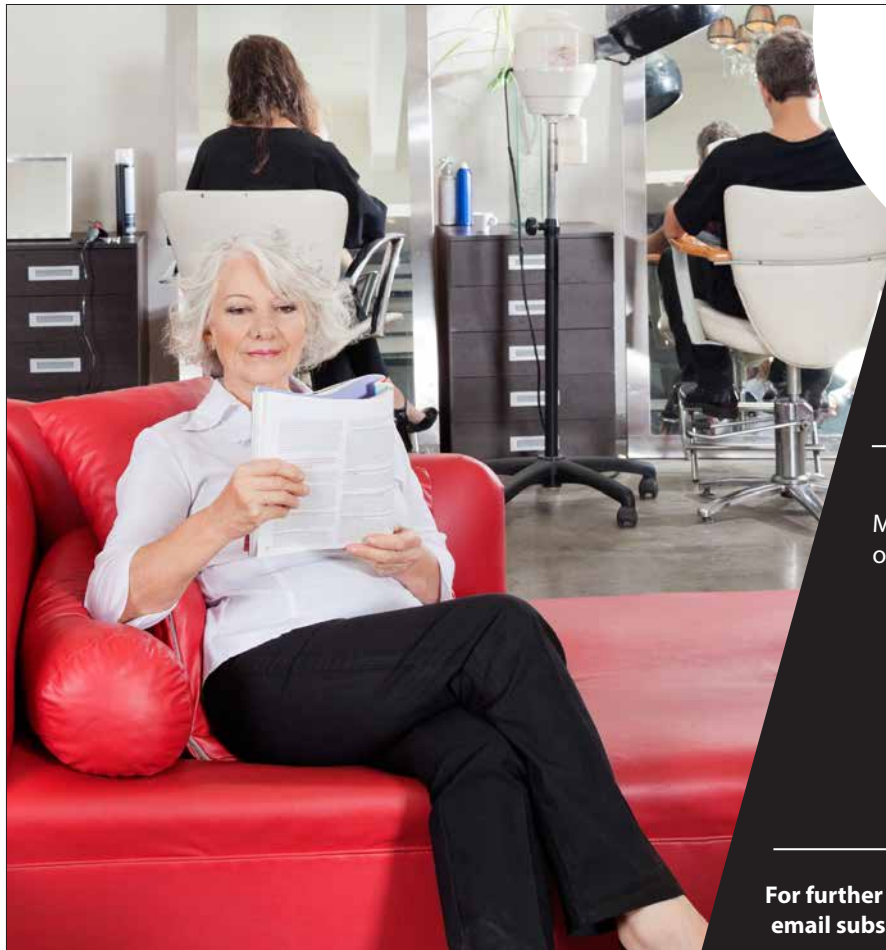
New South Wales has recently cemented significant amendments to its work health and safety (WHS) framework, introducing the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2025 (remaking the 2017 Regulation) and bolstering the WHS Act with substantial new provisions.

Amongst the significant amendments, the NSW WHS framework has undergone a crucial transformation to combat the severe risks posed by Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) dust. These changes, enacted through the new WHS Regulation 2025, introduce stringent, modern, and prescriptive duties for Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBUs) in high-risk sectors such as construction, demolition, and tunnelling. The goal is to enforce proactive control and accountability for this deadly occupational hazard.

The crucial new obligation: Silica worker register:

A significant new mechanism is the mandatory Silica Worker Register (SWR), which commenced on 1 October 2025.

- **Registration Duty:** PCBUs involved in high-risk processing of Crystalline Silica Substances (CSS)—materials with at least 1% crystalline silica—must notify SafeWork NSW. High-risk processing includes mechanical activities like cutting or grinding where RCS exposure is likely to exceed half the Workplace Exposure Standard (0.025mg/m3).



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- **Purpose:** The Register creates a centralised, long-term record of at-risk workers. This ensures individuals are linked to mandatory health monitoring (like lung function tests) and long-term health surveillance, which is vital for early detection and management of silicosis.

Strict control and compliance measures:

The regulations impose direct operational duties to eliminate or minimise RCS exposure:

- 1. Prohibition on Uncontrolled Processing:** PCBU's are legally prohibited from processing CSS unless the process is "controlled." This mandates the use of the highest reasonably practicable controls, such as isolation of the worker, effective wet dust suppression, or on-tool dust extraction. Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) is strictly a last line of defence.
- 2. Silica Risk Control Plans (SRCPs):** A written SRCP must be prepared before any high-risk processing commences. This plan documents the risk assessment and ensures consistent, enforced control measures across the site.

Mandatory training and monitoring

Two key provisions enforce knowledge and verification:

- **Mandatory Training** (Commenced 1 September 2024): PCBU's must provide workers involved in, or exposed to, high-risk processing with approved training. This training must cover health risks, the application of controls, and the correct

selection and use of RPE, including required fit-testing.

- **Air Monitoring & Notification:** Air monitoring, conducted by a suitably qualified person, is mandatory if the PCBU is uncertain whether exposure exceeds the Workplace Exposure Standard (WES) of 0.05 mg/m3 (8-hour TWA). Crucially, if monitoring, conducted after 1 September 2024, reveals an exceedance of the WES, the PCBU must notify SafeWork NSW within 14 days of receiving the report.

Key compliance dates at a glance:

Date	Requirement
1 July 2024	National Engineered Stone Ban
1 September 2024	Mandatory Training & Monitoring Notification
1 October 2025	Silica Worker Register (SWR) Commenced

These sweeping changes reinforce that compliance with control measures is non-negotiable. The NSW WHS framework has moved decisively to track and prevent the severe threat of respirable crystalline silica, marking a profound step in occupational disease prevention.

For further information or to discuss how Hazmat Services can assist with compliance to the new 2025 NSW WHS Regulations call (02) 4961 1887, email andrew.russel@hazmat-services.com.au or visit www.hazmat-services.com.au



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- ◆ Soil and Waste Classifications
- ◆ Licensed Asbestos Assessors
- ◆ Environmental Plans
- ◆ Asbestos and Hazardous Materials Surveys
- ◆ Asbestos and Hazardous Materials Management Plans
- ◆ Emergency response to Catastrophic Events
- ◆ Asbestos, Silica, Dust, Chemical, Noise Monitoring
- ◆ Occupational Hygiene Monitoring Programs for Environmental Remediation Projects
- ◆ Occupational Hygiene Management Plans
- ◆ Respirator Fit Testing



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University recognises trailblazing geologist and advocate for women in science

Professor Beryl Nashar AO OBE, a trailblazing geologist, educator, and one of the founding figures of the University of Newcastle, has been recognised at Callaghan Campus with the GP (General Purpose) Building named in her honour.

Professor Nashar was the University's Foundation Professor of Geology (1955), and later Dean of Science (1965), the first female Dean of Science at any Australian university. She was also a tireless advocate for women in science, and for equity and access to higher education.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said Professor Nashar had helped shape the University's identity.

"The naming of this building ensures that Professor Nashar's pioneering spirit, scientific excellence, humanity and commitment to equity continue to inspire future generations at the University of Newcastle and beyond."

"As a scholar, she had a distinguished career in petrology and mineralogy, and as a leader, she was a role model on campus and beyond. She was renowned for her empathy and generosity. Her door was always open to both students and colleagues," Professor Zelinsky said.

"She was a trailblazing female leader at a time when there were few in sight, whose impact continues to shape our University and our region. It is fitting that we recognise her as we celebrate the University's 60th anniversary."

Born in Maryville and educated locally, Professor Nashar was the first in her family to attend university, graduating from the University of Sydney with First Class Honours. She topped her class in geology for each year of her undergraduate degree, and was awarded the University Medal in Science.

She returned to Newcastle in 1955 to take up a role in what was then a College of the University of New South Wales. Located at Tighes Hill, on the same site as the TAFE NSW Hunter Institute, conditions were cramped, and Professor Nashar's "office" was a flimsy partition in the typing pool.

Her distinguished career in petrology and mineralogy was matched by her tireless advocacy for women's participation in science and education. Having benefited from scholarships in her own education, she had great empathy for students suffering difficult circumstances.

Professor Nashar was the first woman in Australia to win a Rotary Foundation Fellowship (which she took in Cambridge), and only the third Australian to receive the fellowship overall. In 1952, she earned Australia's first PhD in geology from the University of Tasmania.

Professor Nashar's legacy extends beyond academia. She served on numerous boards, including those of the Royal Newcastle Hospital and the Greater Newcastle Building Society, and held leadership roles in international organisations such as the Federation of Business and Professional Women. She worked on many academic and community committees, including for the Australian Red Cross, the NSW Police Department, for the creation of the new Medical Faculty at the University of Newcastle and for the creation of the University of Western Sydney.

Her contributions were recognised with numerous honours, including Officer of the Order of the British Empire for service to education and international relations and later an Officer of the Order of Australia for service to the community.

A ceremony was held outside the building on Tuesday 11 November, with Professor Nashar's son, Tarek, and other family members in attendance, along with University leaders.

Professor Nashar is also remembered through the University of Newcastle's prestigious Beryl Nashar Young Researcher Award – an annual Alumni Award recognising the emerging research



Deputy Chancellor Mr Kevin Young (far left) and Vice Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky AO (far right) with Professor Beryl's Nashar's family including son Mr Tarek Bashar, grandson Philippe Bashar, granddaughter Dr Claire Bashar and grand son-in-law Dr Nicholas Emmanuel at the unveiling of the Professor Beryl Nashar Building and portrait.

achievements of early and mid-career alumni researchers.

The naming of the Beryl Nashar Building follows the honouring of other foundational figures, including journalist Dr Vic Levi; Founding Principal of Newcastle Teachers' College, Mr Griffith Duncan and Foundation Dean of the School of Medicine, Professor David Maddison.

Professor David Maddison, distinguished psychiatrist and visionary leader in medical education, was recognised in October through the renaming of the MSW (Medical Sciences West) Building at Callaghan campus.

Under his leadership, the Faculty of Medicine introduced pioneering approaches to teaching, including community-connected, problem-based learning and innovative admissions and evaluation systems.

Addressing occupation gender segregation key to boosting economy and progressing gender economic equality

A new report from Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) has outlined opportunities to advance gender economic equality in the jobs and skills system.

The third and final paper in JSA's Gender Economic Equality Study identifies 10 areas for action in addressing occupational gender segregation and gendered divides in education, training and skills.

Accelerating progress towards gender economic equality will help address barriers at societal, educational, industry and workplace levels, and improve productivity and workforce sustainability.

The paper highlights that achieving this progress will require commitment from all levels of government, employers and the broader skills and education sector both now and into the future.

The first two papers of the study explored the jobs and skills system challenges that contribute to inequality and maintain Australia's highly gendered jobs, pay gaps and divides across education and training.

This paper, 'Speeding up progress towards gender economic equality', is available now on the JSA website: <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/research/studies/gender-economic-equality-study>

Creating more diverse workforces a cross the

Across the Hunter region, businesses are recognising the value of diverse teams and the positive impact that inclusive employment can have on workplace culture, productivity, and long-term growth. For Mai-Wel, this focus aligns with a long history of supporting people with disability, injury or health conditions to contribute their skills and strengths to local workplaces.

Inclusive Employment Australia is helping to spark a significant period of growth for **Mai-Wel**, with new locations across the Hunter region set to support more people with disability into meaningful work. This expansion marks an important step in meeting local workforce needs while creating genuine opportunities for participants and employers. As a trusted local organisation with more than 65 years of experience, Mai-Wel continues to evolve to meet the needs of our region.

Through Inclusive Employment Australia, **Mai-Wel** is partnering with businesses across the region to build more inclusive practices and open new employment pathways. Participants receive practical, hands-on support to prepare for work, while employers benefit from tailored guidance that helps them attract and retain diverse talent. These partnerships are central to **Mai-Wel's** approach to building stronger, more inclusive workforces.

Mai-Wel's Chief Executive Officer, John Cleary, says the growth reflects **Mai-Wel's** long-standing commitment to creating opportunities for people with disability to contribute to their communities.

"Workplaces are stronger when they reflect the diversity of our community. This expansion allows us to reach more people, support more employers, and strengthen the local workforce. Our goal is to create pathways that lead to long-term employment success for participants and real benefits for business," John said.

A key part of **Mai-Wel's** success lies in their range of services that support participants at every stage of life. Social, Community and Creative Pathways help people build confidence, communication skills, and independence, all of which are essential foundations for successful employment. **Mai-Wel** Academy and Academy Prep provide young people with opportunities to explore different industries, try new workplaces, and learn the work habits and skills needed to thrive.

Mai-Wel Enterprises adds further strength to this ecosystem. As an established social enterprise in the Hunter, it offers supported training and real on-the-job experience in manufacturing and production. Participants develop practical skills in a structured environment, increasing readiness for open employment when the time is right.

Together, these services form a connected pathway that supports people to learn, grow, and move confidently into work. With Inclusive Employment Australia driving expansion across the region, **Mai-Wel** is continuing its mission to help build a more diverse and inclusive workforce for the Hunter, while giving employers the support, training, and practical tools they need to strengthen diversity in their own workplaces.

Strengthen diversity in your workplace with Mai-Wel.
Find out more today at <https://mwlfs.com.au/employers/>



Mai-Wel partners with businesses across the Hunter to create inclusive workplaces and open new pathways for people with disability.

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BUILD A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE WITH MAI-WEL



P: (02) 4015 8400 E: maiwel@maiwel.com.au W: <https://maiwel.com.au>

Ana Saiao driving diversity in civil construction

The finalists for the 2025 Civil Contractors Federation NSW (CCF NSW) People Awards have been announced, and Daracon Group's Ana Saiao, Workforce Development Lead has been named among them.

Ana is a finalist in the Women in Civil Construction Excellence Award category - a recognition of her dedication to promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.



The award celebrates women in civil construction who demonstrate outstanding leadership, and actively champion and empower other women across the industry - a fitting recognition for Ana, who has proactively delivered a range of diversity and inclusion promoting initiatives across not only the Group, but the wider industry.

In her dual roles on the Hexham Straight Widening Alliance, partly funded via the Women in Construction Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program, Ana has been responsible for delivering social procurement outcomes and for identifying and addressing barriers to female engagement across the construction industry.

Her work in this space has resulted in Indigenous and female pre-employment programs that created real job opportunities, the SheBuilds soft-skills program that empowers women through confidence and professional development, and "CED Talks" to encourage collaboration and learning across teams. Ana also played a key role in improving female-friendly site facilities, introducing designated amenities, better lighting and tailored PPE. Many of her initiatives have now been shared and adopted across the wider Daracon Group, as well as other Women in Construction programs throughout New South Wales.

"Ana's leadership has had a tangible and lasting impact for not just Daracon, but the wider industry," Ms Morson said. "Her ability to connect with people, deliver meaningful programs and influence cultural change is exactly what this award represents. We're incredibly proud to see her recognised for her efforts," said Emma Morson, Daracon Group's Senior HR Specialist - Compliance, Diversity and Inclusion.

PKF Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan

PKF Australia has launched their inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This plan marks a significant step in PKF's journey to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and promote cultural understanding across our organisation.

The RAP is built on the three core pillars of relationships, respect, and opportunities. These pillars guide our efforts to create a workplace that values diversity, fosters inclusion, and contributes meaningfully to reconciliation. They also align with the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity, and historical acceptance.

As part of our RAP commitments, PKF Australia has implemented cultural awareness training across their national offices. This initiative was developed to increase understanding, recognition, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and rights.

Pindara Training Services, led by Andrew Johnston, was identified as a provider whose approach aligned with PKF's values. His training was selected for its clarity, relevance, and ability to engage teams across our diverse network. The sessions were designed to be accessible and impactful, encouraging reflection and respectful dialogue.

The training is now a core component of our employee induction program, ensuring that every new team member begins their journey at PKF with a foundation of cultural knowledge. This initiative supports the broader diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy, which aims to create a workplace where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

The impact has been significant. PKF teams have gained a deeper understanding of First Nations cultures and respectful ways of engagement. This has enhanced their ability to work with First Nations businesses and communities, and to better understand their unique needs.

To symbolise the commitment, PKF commissioned an artwork titled *The Path We Tread* by Gomerioi artist Jodie Herden. Unveiled at their Tamworth office, the piece represents PKF as a central gathering circle, connecting with communities, clients, and colleagues. It reflects our core value of belonging together and serves as a visual reminder of our reconciliation journey.

Staff across PKF received button pins featuring the artwork, worn proudly as a symbol of commitment and a way to spark meaningful conversations.

PKF says the RAP is just the beginning and that they are committed to continuing this journey with integrity and purpose. They aim to build on this foundation to develop future RAPs and initiatives that create lasting impact.



NCIG awards funding to 28 local organisations

NCIG has announced that 28 outstanding community organisations have received support through their September 2025 Community Support Program (CSP).

This round showcases the diversity and dedication of groups working across the Hunter, from wellbeing and cultural initiatives to education, sport and environmental care. Each organisation plays a vital role in strengthening our region and supporting those who need it most.

More than \$106,000 in funding has been distributed this round, enabling recipients to grow their programs, deliver new initiatives, and continue making a positive, practical impact in their communities. NCIG says they value the commitment these groups bring to the region and are honoured to stand alongside them in their work.

As part of the celebration, NCIG welcomed recipients to a morning tea on site, a long-standing tradition that enables recipients to connect with one another, build relationships, and meet the NCIG team.

The organisations funded were:

- Bar In Water Polo Inc
- Bhuminanda Dhaulidevi (BnD) Foundation
- CALD Connect Foundation
- Cooks Hill Preschool Incorporated
- Families Supporting Families Incorporated
- Gari Yala Aboriginal Cultural Fundraising Indigenous Corporation
- KIDS Foundation
- Kiwanis Beachside Newcastle
- Lions Club of Jesmond
- LIVEfree Project Incorporated
- Mayfield Boomerangs Baseball Club



- Newcastle Pasifika Inc
- Nobby's SLSC
- Novocastrian Ladies Hockey Association Incorporated
- Road Safety Education Limited
- Parkinson's NSW Limited
- Reach Newcastle Homeless Services
- Sleepys Foundation Limited
- Stockton Little Athletics
- Stockton SLSC
- Survivors R Us
- The Cove Men's Shed Inc
- The Friends of The Schoolmasters House Incorporated
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Helping build brighter futures for young people

As part of Yancoal Australia's partnership with leading electrical supplier Lawrence & Hanson, they have assisted in donating \$16,500 to the Kids Under Cover charity, which works tirelessly to prevent youth homelessness.

Kids Under Cover envisions a community where no young person is homeless. Every day they strive to prevent youth homelessness through the provision of secure and stable accommodation, and financial assistance for young people to continue or re-engage with their education or training.

These funds will continue to grow and expand Kids Under Cover's work in providing safe, stable accommodation and educational opportunities for young people at risk of homelessness.

Lawrence & Hanson supports Yancoal Australia across mine sites in New South Wales and Queensland, providing electrical and industrial products to help ensure reliable and efficient mining operations. As a component of the partnership, the miner generates partner reward points which were recently converted into a dollar value and donated to Kids Under Cover. This was marked with a cheque presentation event with representatives from Lawrence & Hanson, Yancoal Australia and Kids Under Cover in attendance.

Tim Van Woerkom, General Manager Procurement & Major Projects, from Yancoal Australia was honoured to donate to such a vital charity.

"We aim to make a positive difference to the community and the lives of the people living and working in the areas we operate.

"Kids Under Cover works directly with the community to identify gaps and solutions to help young people who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness.

"This was an opportunity to help young people who are at risk in the community, so for us, supporting Kids Under Cover was a perfect fit," said Tim.

Lawrence & Hanson is Australia's leading electrical wholesaler with over 150 branches across the country employing over 1,000 staff. It is focused on the B2B supply of electrical, industrial and safety products. Jason Crosara from Lawrence & Hanson was pleased to continue supporting an incredible charity.

"Working with Kids Under Cover supports our mission to making a difference in people lives.

"No young person in the community chooses to be homeless. Kids Under Cover does a fantastic job at trying to intervene early to alleviate the pressures that lead to homelessness.

"We are a longstanding electrical partner of Yancoal Australia and proud we could combine our missions to build stronger communities and donate funding to Kids Under Cover," said Jason.

Kids Under Cover works to prevent and end youth homelessness by delivering secure, purpose-built studios, education scholarships and tailored support that keep young people connected to family, community and education.

Boost for domestic solar manufacturing

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has announced up to \$151 million in conditional funding under the Australian Government's \$1 billion Solar Sunshot Program (Solar Sunshot) for the establishment of a 500 MW per annum solar module manufacturing facility in the Hunter.

The funding will support the development of the Hunter Valley Solar Foundry project, an initiative of the Sunman Group (Sunman) founded by solar pioneer and UNSW alumnus Dr Zhengrong Shi. The project will develop a new, advanced manufacturing facility while drawing on Sunman's pioneering technology and track-record as a lightweight solar innovator.



ARENA CEO Darren Miller said the project is a clear demonstration of Solar Sunshot's mission to advance solar manufacturing in Australia, reduce reliance on imports and expand Australia's role in global clean energy supply chains.

"Deployment of solar photovoltaics at scale is central to meeting our long-term emissions goals. Building our manufacturing capabilities will help ensure that our supply chains are resilient and Australian innovations are supported as we accelerate the rollout of solar PV," Mr Miller said.

"Solar Sunshot is about building on Australia's world-leading solar research to expand manufacturing capacity, strengthen supply-chain resilience and grow local jobs and skills. The Hunter Valley Solar Foundry project reflects these goals, bringing together advanced technology, local workforce development and long-term economic benefits for regional communities."

The proposed facility aims to produce a range of solar PV modules for use in domestic and international markets, including Sunman's proprietary enhanced Architecture Ready Composite (eArc) modules, which replace traditional glass with durable polymers, making them up to 70% lighter, easier to transport and faster to install. Beyond manufacturing eArc modules, the facility aims to produce glass modules, develop a solar innovation hub to support the commercialisation of new solar technologies and operate as a solar manufacturing foundry with the ability to provide production capacity to original equipment manufacturers, further strengthening Australia's domestic solar supply chain.

This project also marks a homecoming for Dr Shi who began his pioneering solar research in Australia before global ambitions took him abroad to scale-up solar manufacturing. With Solar Sunshot backing, this new facility will bring world-leading solar expertise back to Australian shores, reaffirming Australia's strength in solar innovation and positioning Australian-made technology to contribute to the global energy transition.

Construction of the facility is expected to create up to 200 jobs, with another 100 ongoing roles once operational. To support long-term workforce development, the project will also partner with an accredited training partner to deliver an advanced manufacturing training program, ensuring local workers can build capability in next-generation solar production. The project further incorporates a First Nations recruitment strategy and a scholarship program to support students pursuing studies in renewable-energy fields, ensuring the benefits of Solar Sunshot extend across the community.

Dr Shi, Founder of the Hunter Valley Solar Foundry, says: "I am proud to establish the Hunter Valley Solar Foundry and bring commercial-scale renewable manufacturing to Australia. Once established, the Hunter Valley Solar Foundry will be the largest manufacturer of solar photovoltaic modules in Australia, and the only one in NSW, delivering world-leading products to residential, commercial and utility customers around the country.

"As a proud Australian and a solar expert trained at the University of NSW, it has been my long-held ambition to establish solar module manufacturing in Australia, and it is my hope that over time the Foundry supports the foundation of a vertically-integrated solar supply chain in Australia. This is an important milestone in Australia's energy transition."



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Newcastle Mine Rescue Competition

Mines Rescue brigades were called to Centennial Coal's Cooranbong Mine on 7 November 2025 to test their emergency response skills at the annual Newcastle Mines Rescue competition.

Teams faced a series of realistic rescue scenarios that tested their knowledge, skills, and teamwork under pressure. The competition also provided a valuable development opportunity, giving new brigade members the chance to work alongside and learn from more experienced brigade members.

The Orange team, captained by Jordan Mearns, was named the overall winners of the event. Jordan thanked Mines Rescue and the mine sites for allowing the teams to train and compete, emphasising that their efforts weren't about accolades, but being ready to respond when it matters most and making a real difference.

"I've just come back from the Australian [Mines Rescue] competition, and with that high level of training and expectation, I wanted to use my experience to lift this new team," said Jordan.

"Today I rallied the team to set high standards, with my goal being for them to perform effectively in real-life situations. This was a very challenging competition that tested the core skills we learn as brigade members, yet the team stood tall. I'm so proud of every one of them and looking forward to leading them at the Australian competition next year," he added.

A formal presentation dinner was held to announce the winners and honour both new inductees and long-standing contributors to Mines Rescue.

In addition to awards recognising 5, 15 and 25 years of service, Tony Sutcliffe was humbled and honoured to receive a 40-year service award. He reflected on the people he met, the camaraderie shared, and the experiences that shaped his time in Mines Rescue, expressing heartfelt thanks to all who supported him along the way.

The perpetual 'Champions Award' recognises individuals who embody Mines Rescue's core values of 'we care, we work together and we make a difference'. This year's recipient was Steve Pettit, who served 28 years as a brigade member and retired 12 months ago. He was overwhelmed as he spoke of the legacy of past recipients, some of whom had previously been his team captains. He also shared how much he loved every minute of his time in mines rescue and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to be part of such a remarkable group of people.

Mines Rescue's core role is to support the NSW coal mining industry during emergencies. Although serious incidents are rare, events like this ensure brigade members maintain the skills and readiness required to respond when it matters.

Muswellbrook Shire sets benchmark on worker accommodation

Muswellbrook Shire Council will require operators of major projects in the Shire to house workers in lodgings that benefit the community long after they pack up and leave, under a policy formally adopted by Council.

Councillors' adoption of the Temporary Workforce Accommodation Policy positions Muswellbrook Shire as a leader in managing the infrastructure rollout across the Hunter and NSW with a community-first focus.

Muswellbrook Shire's policy will mean:

- Worker accommodation must be designed for reuse such as affordable housing, aged care or tourism, or to provide infrastructure that allows new residential subdivisions or industry to be built to benefit the Shire long-term.

- Accommodation must be near Shire towns and villages and connect to existing water, sewer, power and digital networks where possible.
- Operators must source food, laundry, recreation and medical services locally, ban "wet mess" alcohol facilities and run shuttles to local centres to support small business.
- Proponents must submit economic impact assessments to avoid harming Muswellbrook's rental market or established visitor accommodation.
- Independent audits will track compliance with local procurement commitments.

The policy has been adopted following community feedback from a 28-day exhibition, with business and advocacy groups backing the Policy but seeking stronger mandates to protect housing affordability and support of local suppliers.

Council estimates as many as 4,500 temporary workers will pass through Muswellbrook in the next decade, peaking at 1,250 between 2027 and 2029 as the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone, Liddell demolition and New England Highway bypass all gather pace.

Muswellbrook Mayor Jeff Drayton said adopting the policy now provides clarity to developers, residents and local businesses.

"Major projects like the dozens we're seeing in Muswellbrook Shire bring opportunity, but only if they're managed responsibly to the standards of our community," Mayor Drayton said.

"This is about housing supply, support for local business and locking in assets for our community. Muswellbrook is proud to set the standard that's quickly become an aspiration for councils in the Hunter."



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Millions pledged to help businesses improve energy performance

The NSW Government has unveiled \$4.5 million worth of grants to save businesses money, improve energy performance and reduce emissions long term.

Three grants encourage medium-to-large organisations to invest in metering and monitoring solutions which better track their energy usage.

Data from these systems can be used to enhance and report on energy performance, which can help business owners save up to 15% on their energy bills.

The grants are designed to suit enterprises at any stage of their metering journey:

- **Submetering Grant (round 2):** Helps businesses install permanent submeters, including hardware and software integration. It can provide up to half the project costs, capped at \$20,000.
- **Metering Plan Implementation Grant (round 2):** Offers businesses \$20,001-\$100,000, covering up to half the project costs, for comprehensive metering and monitoring upgrades, informed by eligible metering and monitoring plans.
- **Energy Performance Services Grant:** Focusing more on services rather than hardware, this grant provides up to \$50,000, covering up to half the project costs, for planning, access to energy monitoring and analytics software, data integration, and expert guidance.

Since 2022, the Submetering Grants have awarded almost \$950,000 in grant funding to 60 projects.

Separately, 23 projects have been implemented under the Metering Plan Implementation Grants, with \$1.3 million in funding awarded.



These grants have supported sectors including manufacturing, hospitality, retail, healthcare, education, and sports facilities.

Businesses can learn more and apply for the grants here: www.bit.ly/metering-and-monitoring

Glencore Coal's contribution adds up for Hunter communities

5,110 Direct jobs

\$1.6 billion Annual spend on goods and services

1,210 Suppliers

\$2.2 billion

2024 total direct contribution

Glencore in the Hunter Valley

- Mangoola Coal
- Liddell Coal
- Hunter Valley Operations*
- Mount Owen Glendell Coal
- Integra Coal**
- United Wambo
- Bulga Coal
- Ravensworth Coal



Scan the QR code to find out how our economic contributions add up for New South Wales, or visit glencore.ws/Contributions

GLENCORE

Data from the Commonwealth Electoral Division of Hunter. All dollar figures are in AUD and relate to the 2024 calendar year. Glencore's total direct economic contribution includes our payment of wages and salaries; spend on goods and services; payment of taxes and royalties to federal, state, territory and local governments; and support for community partnerships. * Hunter Valley Operations is an independently operated Joint Venture in which Glencore owns a 49% stake. **Our Integra mine reached the end of its scheduled life in 2024 and is in the process of rehabilitation and closure.

Newcastle manufacturing company secures China deal

Award-winning Newcastle manufacturing company DELTAwater solutions has added another string to its bow after securing a three-year project to supply water treatment systems to the biggest coal mining company in China.

The Shendong Mining Group Project, worth up to \$6.6 million, is to supply magnetic water conditioners for underground coal mining. Shendong is a division of China Energy which is focussed on adopting renewable, clean energy practices.

DELTAwater solutions agent Will Cheng from Shanxi Hong Baiqin Sc&Tec Co. Ltd attended a ceremonial signing of the contract in Shanghai in late November.

DELTAwater solutions founders Alex and Dianne Panov have been pioneering water treatment with magnetics since 1993.

With a manufacturing plant and office at Sandgate and an agent network across Australia and overseas, they have been exporting their chemical-free products to China for more than a decade. They also export to Egypt, the UK, South Africa, Vanuatu, Indonesia, Italy, Canada, the US and New Zealand.



Alex Panov packing customised units for delivery to China.

Mr Panov said scaling was a major problem in all mining, costing companies millions in chemical treatments to keep pumps and pipes clear.

“We have developed a unique water treatment system over the past three decades through in-field testing and extensive research and development. Our products don’t need any chemicals or expensive equipment such as reverse osmosis.”

DELTAwater solutions uses magnets that are exceptionally durable, losing only one per cent of their power over 20 years.

“What attracts mining companies to DELTAwater solutions is a combination of our focus on sustainability and the fact that we have a simple, cost-effective solution that doesn’t require chemical storage or complex safety protocols,” Mr Panov said.

“We are proud to manufacture an environmentally friendly solution that also doesn’t require power or maintenance. You just attach one of our conditioners to the water supply, and it will do the rest.

“This ‘set and forget’ feature eliminates the need for ongoing maintenance, chemical handling, or expensive refills – a key consideration during negotiations with China.”

DELTAwater solutions conditioners are also installed in mines across Australia, and are part of a new dust suppression trial project with BHP that started last year.

Large-scale irrigators, wineries, broadacre cropping farmers, thoroughbred horse studs and fruit and vegetable farms are among other industries using DELTAwater solutions water conditioning systems.

Common problems their products address in agriculture and mining include leaf burn, calcium scale build-up, iron, water hardness and salinity build-up in soils.

Understanding the water they’re treating through their water testing and advisory service is the key to the company’s long-term success.

“One size does not fit all when it comes to solving water quality problems,” Mr Panov said.

“This is why we always test and analyse the water, in context of what the water is used for and what water delivery system is already in place.

“We also take landscape and environment into consideration before making a product recommendation.

“We have units in the field that we manufactured when DELTAwater solutions first started, still working effectively 32 years down the track.”

A promotional banner for DELTAwater solutions. The top part features the company logo, which consists of the word "Delta" in orange and "water" in white, with "solutions" in orange below it, all enclosed in a white oval with a blue background. Below the logo, the text "Pioneering water treatment with magnetics since 1993" is written in orange. The middle section shows two images: on the left, a large, complex industrial water treatment system with many pipes and tanks; on the right, a red forklift carrying a large black cylindrical unit on a wooden pallet in front of a building. The bottom section has a dark blue background with white text: "Power, maintenance and chemical free" and "No restrictions on flow or volume". At the bottom, the website "deltawater.com.au" and phone number "1800 283 600" are listed, along with social media icons for Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and YouTube.



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CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

SUNDAY 15TH

1pm - Exhibitor Bump In
5pm - Evening Arrival Function

MONDAY 16TH

11am - Opening Ceremony
1pm - Technical Sessions
6:30pm - Welcome Function

TUESDAY 17TH

8:30am - Technical Sessions
12:30pm - *Activity Options*
6:30pm - Eat Street Function

WEDNESDAY 18TH

8:30am - Technical Sessions
6:30pm - Gala Dinner

THURSDAY 19TH

8:30am - Technical Sessions
Conference concludes at 1pm

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19th ACPS Conference & 60th Anniversary Energising the Future Proudly Sponsored by Bengalla New Hope

The Australian Coal Preparation Society (ACPS) is proud to invite you to the 19th Biennial Conference & Exhibition, including the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the ACPS. This year's conference will be held at Rydges Resort Hunter Valley from 1pm Sunday 15th March until 1pm on Thursday 19th March 2025.

On Sunday, the Conference begins with exhibitor set up and preview, followed by the Sunday Evening Arrival Function in and around the exhibition area.

The conference officially kicks off on the Monday morning with the opening ceremony and guest speaker before the technical sessions begin. The technical sessions will be followed by drinks in the exhibition area before buses arrive to take us to the welcome function at Harrigan's.

Tuesday technical sessions will begin at 8am until 11.30am where we will split into groups to take either a technical tour, train ride to Dungog including lunch and drinks, or a round of golf. At 6:30pm, we will reconvene at the exhibition area for our Tuesday Eat Street Function.

On Wednesday, technical sessions will run from 8am to 4pm. In the evening, buses will transport guests to Hope Estate for the conference Gala Dinner, commencing at 6:30pm in celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the ACPS. ***Gala Dinner entry is only included with Full Registration tickets. Additional tickets available for purchase.***

Full Registration provides access to all technical sessions, evening functions, Tuesday activity,

conference Gala Dinner, daily arrival coffee/tea, morning and afternoon teas, and all lunches throughout the conference. Delegates will also receive a satchel containing a copy of the Conference Proceedings.

Day Registration includes access to technical sessions on the selected day, along with arrival coffee/tea, morning and afternoon teas, lunch, and the evening function scheduled for that day. Day registrants will also receive a copy of the Conference Proceedings. ***Day Registration excludes entry to the conference Gala Dinner. Tickets available for purchase separately.***

Please see the following pages for the conference overview and visit the website for more information.
<https://acps2026conference.com/>

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"SECURE DESTRUCTION - GUARANTEED"

A man at a funeral interrupts the priest and says, "Excuse me, do you have the WiFi password?"

The priest stares at him and says, "Good God man, have some decency. This is your mother's funeral!"

And the man says, "Is that all lower case?"

A doctor greets his patient in the exam room, "If it isn't David, the software engineer!"

"That's me!" replies David. "But wait, how'd you know I was a software engineer?"

The doctor holds up a folder. "We got the results back from the lab. It's obvious."

"Obvious?" asks David. "How can you tell that from a stool sample?"

And the doctor replies, "David.. there's no easy way to put this.. but its full of bugs."

Three tailors are on the same little street.

The first one had a sign that said: "Best Tailor in Australia."

The second one put up a sign: "Best Tailor in the World."

The third one thought for a moment and wrote on his: "Best Tailor on This Street."

At church one Sunday Joe asked the pastor, "Would you pray for my hearing."

The pastor puts his hands on Joe's ears and enthusiastically prays. When finished the pastor asks: "So how's your hearing?"

Joe says: "I don't know, it's not till next Monday."

An old lady walked up to the counter in her bank, handed her account card to the teller and then said, "I would like to withdraw \$10."

Giving the old lady a look bordering on contempt, the teller

replied, "For withdrawals of less than \$100, you must use the ATM."

Looking a little crestfallen, the old lady asked why she couldn't withdraw her money from the counter.

"These are the rules, mam," said the teller irritably, as she returned the bank card to the old lady. "Now move along, please, because there's a line of customers behind you."

The old lady remained silent for a few seconds as she gathered her thoughts.

She then handed the card to the teller and said, "Then please, can you help me withdraw \$3000 from my account?"

"Well, mam, you can withdraw up to \$3,000", the teller responded.

"In that case, let me have \$3,000 now, in \$10 bills, please," said the old lady.

So, the teller laboriously counted out the \$3,000 in \$10 bills, then counted again, and finally, she handed the cash to the old lady.

As the old lady took \$10 from the top of the pile and put it in her purse, the teller then said, "Would there be anything else I can help you with today, mam?"

"Yes!" said the old lady with a smile, "I'd like to deposit \$2990 into my account, please."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Many of life's failures are experienced by people who did not realise how close they were to success when they gave up."

- Thomas Edison



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