

13 September 2026

Singleton engineering firm wins big in Business Hunter Awards

Singleton manufacturer Morgan Engineering was named Business of the Year at a glittering 2026 Business Hunter Awards ceremony on Friday night, capping off a standout year for the fast-growing company, which collected four awards.

Morgan Engineering's dominance was one of several highlights from a gala evening at NEX Newcastle attended by more than 600 business and community leaders, as Business Hunter celebrated its 140th anniversary and the culmination of an awards program that attracted a record-breaking 300-plus entries.

Other notable winners included the University of Newcastle Professor Alan Broadfoot, who received the prestigious President's Award, Burton Automotive, which was honoured with the Contribution to the Region Award, and industrial safety technology company SAPHI, which was inducted into the Business Hunter Hall of Fame while also claiming the Excellence in Innovation Award.

Morgan Engineering impressed judges with its solid growth strategy, which has seen the business expand from 80 to more than 130 employees, coupled with a strong commitment to workforce wellbeing and career development, including a significant investment in apprentice training. Morgan also won the awards for Excellence in Large Business, Workplace Health and Wellbeing, and Young Business Leader.

Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes said their success reflected the strength and capability of Hunter businesses competing on a national and international stage.

"To see a home-grown manufacturing business take out four awards, including Business of the Year, is a tremendous achievement and a testament to the quality of businesses operating in our region," Mr Hawes said.

"This year's awards attracted more than 300 entries, the largest number in our 140-year history, and the calibre of finalists and winners demonstrates the innovation, ambition and resilience that continue to drive the Hunter forward."

Meanwhile, Burton Automotive's Contribution to the Region Award acknowledged its longstanding partnerships with community organisations, including its enduring support of Surfest, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Professor Broadfoot was recognised for a career spanning leadership roles with Ampcontrol, the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources and the University of Newcastle, where he has played a pivotal role in fostering collaboration between industry and research while helping position the Hunter as a leader in innovation and advanced industry.

Business Hunter President Glenn Thornton said Professor Broadfoot's influence on the region would be felt for generations.

"Alan has played a pivotal role in shaping the Hunter's future through his leadership, vision and commitment to collaboration between industry and research," Mr Thornton said.

"He is a trusted adviser, mentor and advocate for our region, and a highly deserving recipient of this year's President's Award."

The awards recognised exceptional business leadership across the Hunter in a range of categories.

Jandy McCandless, General Manager Housing and Impact at Hume Community Housing, was named Business Leader of the Year for her work delivering programs and partnerships that have improved housing, community wellbeing and social outcomes across the region.

Elliot Watson, Managing Partner of Watson Wealth, received the parallel award for small businesses (up to 20 employees) for driving significant business growth while strengthening the firm's workplace culture and community engagement.

The Kristen Keegan Young Business Leader Award went to Brody Nowlan from Morgan Engineering. Nowlan joined the company as a 16-year-old apprentice fitter machinist and has risen through the organisation to become Workshop Operations Manager, overseeing four operational departments and 67 employees.

Business Singleton was crowned Outstanding Local Chamber, claiming yet another gong for the town to add to Morgan Engineering's four awards.

Mr Thornton said this year's record participation reflected a thriving and confident regional business community.

"The diversity of winners, finalists and entrants shows the incredible breadth of talent and enterprise that exists across the Hunter," he said.

"From manufacturers and technology innovators to community leaders and family businesses, these awards celebrate the people and organisations helping create a stronger future for our region."

Winners of aligned categories will progress to the Business NSW Awards in Sydney on October 30, carrying the Hunter's hopes onto the state stage.

The 2026 Business Hunter Awards were proudly sponsored by Newcastle Permanent.

Full list of winners on following page.

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AWARD CATEGORY	WINNER
Business of the Year	Morgan Engineering
Outstanding Business Leader (21 employees and over)	Jandy McCandless, Hume Community Housing
Outstanding Business Leader (under 20 employees)	Elliot Watson, Watson Wealth
Kristen Keegan Young Business Leader	Brody Nowlan, Morgan Engineering
President's Award	Professor Alan Broadfoot
Excellence in Large Business	Morgan Engineering
Excellence in Small Business (6-20 employees)	Soqual Creative Agency
Excellence in Medium Business	AVE Technologies
Excellence in Micro Business	Seed People Consulting
Outstanding Community Organisation	Hunter Melanoma Foundation
Excellence in International Business	Whiteley
Outstanding New Business	Strata Tech Solutions
Excellence in Innovation	SAPHI – Shellshock AI
Excellence in Sustainability	Lake Macquarie City Council
Employer of Choice (under 20 employees)	Spectrum Comms
Employer of Choice (21 employees and over)	Beam Bookkeeping
Outstanding Local Chamber	Business Singleton
Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion	Hall & Wilcox
Excellence in Workplace Health and Wellbeing	Morgan Engineering
Contribution to the Region	Burton Automotive Group
Outstanding Visitor Experience	Oakvale Wildlife Park
Outstanding Employee	Claudia Tolhurst, Hunter Melanoma Foundation