

**Embargoed until 10.15pm Friday 13 September**

## **Hunter Business Leaders Crowned**

The region's leading businesses were recognised at the annual Business Hunter Awards celebration, held tonight at NEX.

Bringing together a diverse assembly of 550 guests, the awards acknowledged individuals and organisations that have made a remarkable impact on the region's business landscape.

Business Hunter CEO, Bob Hawes said there were incredibly tight margins in many of the categories this year, so all finalists and award winners should be incredibly proud of their efforts.

"These awards celebrate individuals who have set new standards of excellence with their remarkable contributions. The outstanding finalists and winners tonight demonstrate that we are heading towards an exceptionally promising and dynamic future," said Mr Hawes.

Mr Hawes said the Awards were an important opportunity for celebration and reflection, particularly as tough headwinds continue to impact multiple sectors across the region.

"Some of our region's businesses are enduring multiple back-to-back years of tough conditions. This has demanded courage, adaptability and innovation, especially among those small to medium businesses operating in hospitality, tourism, retail and construction."

"It's encouraging to see so many businesses thriving and sharing their success, despite these tough operating conditions. Tonight was an opportunity to come together as a community to connect, celebrate and reflect on all the challenges and opportunities that come our way," said Mr Hawes.

A total of 127 finalists across 21 categories were recognised, including a new category, Outstanding Visitor Experience, awarded to coastal adventure tourism outfit, Coast XP.

Innovative manufacturing businesses reigned supreme on the night, with pioneering energy systems leader, Ampcontrol, taking out the prestigious President's Award, while global medical supply leader, Whitely, netted one of the night's biggest awards - Business of the Year.

Business Hunter President, Lauren Eyles also recognised the contributions Daracon, Orica and Marcia Chapman, former CEO of Jenny's Place, have made to the region, recognising them in a discrete honour role.

Outgoing long serving Lake Macquarie Mayor, Kay Fraser took out the Outstanding Business Leader >21 employees award, whilst Rob Dawson of Myrtec, took out the Outstanding Business Leader <21 employees award.

Bronte Williamson of Nourished Not Deprived took out the prestigious Kristen Keegan Young Business Leader award, bestowed in honour of former Business Hunter CEO Kristen Keegan.

Out of the Square Media once again took home the Contribution to the Region award in a hotly contested category.

The list of finalists, winners and merit awards features high-quality entrants across the private, government and not-for-profit sectors in a diverse range of business and industry areas, including retail, hospitality, healthcare, tourism, manufacturing, mining, professional services and many more:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Winner</b>
Outstanding Community Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Home in Place</li></ul>
Hunter Love Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Baiada</li></ul>
Excellence in Micro Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little Windmill Clothing Co</li></ul>
Excellence in Small Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SAPHI</li></ul>
Excellence in Large Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 8 at Trinity</li></ul>
Excellence in International Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whiteley</li></ul>
Outstanding New Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Telethrive Pty Ltd</li></ul>
Excellence in Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hyphen Health</li></ul>
Excellence in Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SAPHI</li></ul>
Employer of Choice (under 20 employees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hyphen Health</li></ul>
Employer of Choice (over 21 employees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network</li></ul>
Outstanding Local Chamber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bulahdelah Chamber of Commerce &amp; Tourism</li></ul>
Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Star Club Equestrian Program Inc</li></ul>
Contribution to the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Out of the Square Media</li></ul>
Outstanding Visitor Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CoastXP</li></ul>

Outstanding Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chelsea Day, Mai-Wel Group</li></ul>
Kristen Keegan Young Business Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bronte Williamson - Nourished Not Deprived</li></ul>
President's Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ampcontrol</li></ul>
President's honour roll recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Daracon</li><li>• Orica</li><li>• Marcia Chapman</li></ul>
Outstanding Business Leader <20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rob Dawson - Myrtec</li></ul>
Outstanding Business Leader >21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kay Fraser, Mayor Lake Macquarie Council</li></ul>
Business of the Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whiteley</li></ul>

Business Hunter proudly partnered with the University of Newcastle to present the Business Hunter Awards. The program and event was also supported by more than 21 category sponsors from the regional business community. We thank - The University of Newcastle, AGL, CPA Australia, Glencore, Hunt Hospitality, Hunter Water, IMB Bank, Mai-Wel, Newcastle Herald, NGM Group, NSW Minerals Council, Port Authority of NSW, Port of Newcastle, Quarry Mining, Spirit Super, Umwelt, Hyp, Molly Morgan Wines, and Whiteley.

**Media enquiries: Bob Hawes 0418496745**

All finalists:

**HUNTER WATER LOVE WATER**

**FINALISTS**

- Baiada
- Newcastle Private Hospital
- Stockland Greenhills

**EXCELLENCE IN MICRO BUSINESS**

**FINALISTS**

- Andersen Pest Services
- Hunter Valley Elite Window Tinting
- Little Windmill Clothing Co
- Newvo Pty Ltd
- Note It
- Pod and Pen Productions
- Pretty Bangin' Balloons

- Seed People Consulting

**EXCELLENCE IN SMALL BUSINESS**

**FINALISTS**

- Balanced Beans
- Design Anthology
- Hollydene Estate Wines & Vines Restaurant
- Hunter Pet Motel
- Hyphen Health
- Jaegersoft
- Maxi-Jazz Dance Studio
- Myrtec
- SAPHI
- Scent Central
- TLE Muswellbrook

**EXCELLENCE IN LARGE BUSINESS**

**FINALISTS**

- 8 at Trinity
- DK Heavy Plant Services Pty Ltd
- Hall & Wilcox
- Knight Frank Newcastle
- Morgan Engineering
- Prosperity Advisers Group

**OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY ORGANISATION**

**FINALISTS**

- BU Happiness College
- Car 2 Home Project
- Home in Place
- Hunter Melanoma Foundation
- The Mai-Wel Group
- Rotary Club of Singleton
- The Red Door Community Kitchen Inc

**EXCELLENCE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**

**FINALISTS**

- Pitcrew AI
- Whiteley

**OUTSTANDING NEW BUSINESS**

**FINALISTS**

- Gypsea Loop
- Holzy's Tinting
- Showtime Kayaking
- Stephanie Rose Aesthetics
- Telethrive Pty Ltd

**EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION**

**FINALISTS**

- Community Therapy
- Definiti
- EngageVR
- Hyphen Health
- Morgan Engineering
- SAPHI
- Supply Solutions Group

**EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY**

**FINALISTS**

- Aware...the social design project
- Loop Organics
- Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group
- SAPHI
- SESG

**EMPLOYER OF CHOICE < 20 EMPLOYEES**

**FINALISTS**

- Dynamic Business Technologies
- Hunter Pet Motel
- Hyphen Health
- LJ Hooker Cessnock
- SESG

**EMPLOYER OF CHOICE > 21 EMPLOYEES**

**FINALISTS**

- Community Therapy
- Hall & Wilcox
- Hicksons Lawyers
- Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network
- Lake Group Strata
- Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group
- PKF Sydney and Newcastle

**OUTSTANDING LOCAL CHAMBER**

- Winner – Bulahdelah Chamber of Commerce & Tourism

**EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION  
FINALISTS**

- Dynamic Business Technologies
- Flying Colours Education
- KPMG - Hunter & Newcastle
- Star Club Equestrian Program Inc
- Swietelsky Rail Australia

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE REGION  
FINALISTS**

- Daracon Group
- Downer
- Hunter Medical Research Institute
- KPMG Hunter & Newcastle
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Little Windmill Clothing Co
- Out of the Square Media
- PKF Sydney and Newcastle
- Port of Newcastle
- Sharp Office
- University of Newcastle

**OUTSTANDING VISITOR EXPERIENCE  
FINALISTS**

- 8 at Trinity
- CoastXP
- Hollydene Estate Wines and Vines Restaurant
- Leogate Estate Wines
- Oakvale Wildlife Park
- Tea Gardens BBQ Boats

**OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEE  
FINALISTS**

- Alexander McCallum - Lakes Custom Computers
- Chelsea Day, Mai-Wel Group
- Dean Mainey - Soldier On
- Erin Marney - Maxim Advisors
- Isaac Brambley - SAPHI
- Kurt McRae - Jaegersoft
- Mellissa Gibson - LJ Hooker Cessnock

**KRISTEN KEEGAN YOUNG BUSINESS LEADER**

**FINALISTS**

- Bronte Williamson - Nourished Not Deprived
- Cameron Owen - SAPHI
- Jessica Stewart- Hsv Heaven Pty Ltd
- Jye Rimmington - Rimmington Legal
- Shaun Stoneman - Newcastle Airport
- Skye Harvey - Myrtec
- Steph Loadsman - KPMG

**PRESIDENT'S AWARD**

The President's Award is selected by the Business Hunter President and recognises an organisation or individual that has added substantial value to business efforts in the Hunter Region.

WINNER: Ampcontrol

**OUTSTANDING BUSINESS LEADER**

**Outstanding Business Leader 20 EMPLOYEES AND UNDER**

**FINALISTS**

- Adam Hardy- The Rogue Scholar
- Katie Eslick - Little Windmill Clothing Co
- James Sneddon - Hyphen Health
- Nathan Franks - Dynamic Business Technologies
- Rob Dawson - Myrtec
- Skye Vickers - Hunter Urban Dance Studio
- Stacey Kelly - Seed People Consulting

**Outstanding Business Leader 21 EMPLOYEES AND ABOVE**

**FINALISTS**

- Byrne Tran - Commercial Collective
- Craig Carmody- Port of Newcastle
- Kay Fraser - Lake Macquarie City Council
- Melanie Bird - Lake Group Strata
- Professor Frances Kay-Lambkin - Hunter Medical Research Institute
- Rachel Baigent - Witmore
- Scott Lynch - Community Therapy

**BUSINESS OF THE YEAR**

Business of the Year is open to all winners of the following categories:

- Excellence in International Business
- Employer of Choice < 20 Employees

- Employer of Choice > 21 Employees
- Excellence in Innovation
- Excellence in Sustainability
- Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion
- Excellence in Micro Business
- Excellence in Small Business
- Excellence in Large Business
- WINNER – Whiteley