

# BUSINESS HUNTER

22 November 2024

Lord Mayor Cr Ross Kerridge  
City of Newcastle  
Via email: lordmayor@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Lord Mayor,

**Re: Proposal for a Local Public Holiday on Newcastle Show Day**

Firstly, congratulations on your leadership of Newcastle City Council. At Business Hunter, we value the strong partnership we share with Council and appreciate the proactive steps you are taking to engage the community on important local matters, including the consideration of the bestowing of local public holiday for the Newcastle Show.

We commend Newcastle City Council's ongoing efforts to support and celebrate the Newcastle Show, an event that holds historical and cultural significance for our community. However, Business Hunter has significant concerns regarding the proposal to apply for and declare Friday 28 February as a Local Public Holiday.

We note Council sought to gather community feedback on this matter. It is an important step in promoting inclusivity and transparency. However, we are conscious that surveys of this nature may unintentionally attract a large number of individual responses favouring a "day off," without fully considering the economic impacts on local businesses. Without knowing the outcome of the survey, we suspect the biggest response will be supportive of declaring a public holiday and this should be considered in context when Council makes a decision on whether to advance a request to declare a holiday to the State Government.

With this in mind, we believe it is vital to balance community interests with the practical realities faced by the business sector. Declaring a Public Holiday in the local government area of Newcastle would impose substantial costs on local businesses. This will particularly impact our vulnerable small business owners in industries such as hospitality, retail, events, and recreation, which are already navigating challenges in a fragile economic climate. Recent reports of increases in the number of insolvencies are testament not only to the current economic circumstances, but also the fragility of business conditions.

Business Hunter is prepared to continue to support the application for the declaration of a Local Event Day, which has proven to be an effective alternative in the past.

To provide additional context:

1. **Support for a Local Event Day:** Business Hunter, alongside the region's other peak organisations, has consistently supported a Local Event Day, which enables businesses to decide their level of participation. As we understand, a local Public Holiday has not been

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declared since 2011 and we can not see any compelling reason from a business perspective why this should change in 2025.

2. **Broader Business Impact:** A Public Holiday shifts the financial burden onto businesses, requiring penalty wages and operational adjustments for local businesses. This strain is particularly pronounced for small to medium enterprises, which are the backbone of Newcastle's economy. Whilst we have no doubt some businesses could potentially benefit from incidental expenditure generated as a consequence of parts of the community being on holiday, the same could not be said for the likes of construction, engineering, defence, education and health related businesses that will otherwise be subjected to a significant imposition of costs without an equivalent boost to revenue.
3. **Focused Support for the Show:** Business Hunter has for many years worked with the Newcastle Show Association to assist in attracting corporate sponsorship and strengthen business engagement. We believe this tangible support delivers genuine benefits and garners more considered support for the Show. The declaration of a local public holiday can undo all this goodwill through the potential for a negative reaction on the part of the business centre.

We urge City of Newcastle to consider these matters and not change the status and practise in place since 2011. We will support applying to the State government to declare a Local Event Day rather than a Public Holiday for the Newcastle Show. This approach fosters community celebration while safeguarding the economic viability of our business sector.

We welcome further discussion and are available to provide additional insights from our members on this important matter.

Yours sincerely



**Bob Hawes**  
**CEO**  
**Business Hunter**

CC     Jeremy Bath CEO  
       All Councillors, City of Newcastle