



2026 Awards (2026)

Outstanding Business Leader - 21 Employees and Over (Region: Far South Coast)

Business NSW - Outstanding Business Leader



KeqDvobA

Entry details

Trading name: Business NSW

Name to be used on all promotional materials (publicity materials, certificates, trophies, presentations): Business NSW

Registered ABN: 63 000 014 504

How is your business structured? Other

If Other, please specify Manufacturing

Is your business classified as a not for profit?	Yes
Main office address:	Level 7, 8 Chifley Square
Suburb:	Sydney
Postcode:	2000
Business trading commencement date:	2021-02-03
Number of employees:	21 to 49
What is the main industry your business operates in?	Manufacturing
Is your business primarily business to business or business to consumer?	Business to Consumer

Describe your business, product/service you offer to the market or industry

Established in New South Wales in 1895, Business NSW is a 100% Australian farmer owned dairy co-operative -and Australia's last operating dairy co-operative - with 264 active members on 186 dairy farms and a workforce of 805 throughout northern New South Wales and southeast Queensland. Annual milk production is over 200 million litres. Every time someone chooses to buy Business NSW, every cent goes back to supporting its farmer members and the regional communities within which they operate.

Please provide a 100 word biography for your business to be used for promotional purposes.

Established in New South Wales in 1895, Business NSW is a 100% Australian farmer owned dairy co-operative -and Australia's last operating dairy co-operative - with 264 active members on 186 dairy farms and a workforce of 805 throughout northern New South Wales and southeast Queensland. Annual milk production is over 200 million litres. Every time someone chooses to buy Business NSW, every cent goes back to supporting its farmer members and the regional communities within which they operate.

Website: <https://www.businessnsw.com/>

PROMOTIONAL IMAGES

Please attach 2 hero images that best depict your entry. It could be a logo or team group photo. Images will be used at the awards presentation and for Media for any promotions as required, (These must be no bigger than 10MB each in jpeg format – hi resolution, landscape format images).

PROMOTIONAL IMAGE 1

The logo for Business NSW, featuring the word "BUSINESS" in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font above the word "NSW" in a smaller, bold, black, sans-serif font.

[Download \(19 KiB download\)](#)

PROMOTIONAL IMAGE 2

BUSINESS NSW

[Download \(19 KiB download\)](#)

Full name: Business NSW

Position: Test Entry

Email: test@businessnsw.com

Phone: +61416457382

The employee is not a Regional President, State Councillor or Board Member of NSW Business Chamber Limited. ✓

I am aged 36 years or over at the time of entry. ✓

I or the employee have not been a judge in this category in 2025. ✓

I or the employee am not a judge in the 2026 Business Awards program. ✓

I acknowledge if the I should leave the organisation before the Regional or State Gala event, my entry in this category will no longer be recognised in the Awards program. ✓

I declare that the business or organisation represented in this entry is currently trading solvent and are not under, or anticipating, administration, receivership, or liquidation at the time of submission ✓

This business has 21 employees or more on the payroll in Australia at the time of entry ✓

Outstanding Business Leader_21andover

Full name: John Smith

Current job title: Test Entry

Date of birth: 2021-02-03

Name of your organisation or business: Business NSW

Provide a brief profile, including your current role and scope of responsibilities.

John is Chief-Executive-Officer of Business NSW, Australia's oldest/largest 100% farmer-owned dairy co-operative. One of Australia's most formidable dairy-industry leaders, John's career spans 30+ years across senior financial/business management roles creating and delivering on strategy to drive commercial-impact for some of Australia's biggest agricultural and FMCG-brands.

Commencing as CEO in 2019, John leads an 800-strong workforce and is responsible for delivering key strategic-outcomes for Business NSW, along with ensuring that 'Team Business NSW' is engaged and aligned with the organisation's direction and values.

During his tenure, and with an eye for commercial-value creation and capture, John has driven a business-turnaround, achieving significant record-profits and increased total returns to stakeholders and farmer-members. In his five-years as CEO, he has led the industry on milk-price while increasing farmgate milk-price for members by circa \$62.3M, has secured major long-term supply agreements for the co-operative while, over the past two-years, working tirelessly to secure the future of Business NSW's iconic ice-cream factory – for its members, workforce and community - following the 2022 Lismore floods.

A true advocate for the wellbeing of farmers, John has led national conversations on the importance of farmer mental-health and has actively taken measures to promote and increase mental-health support for Business NSW's farmer-members.

Detail the specific activities and initiatives you have undertaken to reshape your workplace, industry, or community to create a smarter and more inclusive future. Provide examples of how you have demonstrated exceptional leadership, effectively utilised resources, supported the organisation's financial stability or sustainability, and/or driven innovation.

Rebuilt the Lismore ice-cream factory. Officially re-opened November-2023, and securing significant employment opportunities for the community, the year-long rebuild and commissioning process created a more modern and flood-resilient facility than ever before, featuring flood-proof design and technologies equipping the site to defend a 15.0M flood – higher than 2022-levels.

Re-established the Lismore ice-cream business.

Developed tailored strategies pertaining to factory rebuild, employing/training/inducting 130 staff, re-establishing operational-processes, reengaging customers/suppliers, relaunching brands and products. As a major regional employer, helped secure/drive significant economic activity throughout Northern-Rivers.

Milk-Price:

Despite cost-of-living/inflationary pressures, continued leading major industry-processors on farmgate milk-price, helping safeguard the (subtropical) dairy industry's future, ensuring current/future generations of farmers have confidence to invest in the industry; achieved for the past four years-in-a-row.

Farmer-Wellbeing.

Launched the first-ever National Farmer Wellbeing Report, painting a devastating picture of farmer mental-health. John led and drove widespread/sustained industry-conversations resulting in actions from key industry-

organisations, and appointment of BNSW first Farmer Mental-Health Officer.

Sustainability.

Established/implemented Business NSW Sustainability-Roadmap to achieve 30% carbon-intensity reduction by 2030. Program successfully implemented achieving 2030 targets this year, six-years before deadline.

Innovation.

Drove continued organisational commitment to innovation spanning manufacturing-technology, first-to-market NPD, launched 100+ new products, and invested in creating new categories of premium dairy-products. Investments in Australian-first manufacturing technology also cemented Lismore's ice-cream factory as a 'food centre-of-excellence'.

Safety.

Led sustained-improvements in operational-safety achieving a loss-time-injury (LTI) frequency-rate of <5, compared to approximately 70, five-years ago. Over the past twelve-months, achieved a 50% reduction in LTIFR, demonstrating commitment to people/safety.

People.

Increased organisational engagement scores by 24%; implemented/championed the leadership development-program to equip/develop all business managers with key competencies aligned to Business NSW values.

BNSW Rural rebrand.

BNSW Rural was rebranded to Business NSW AgriSolutions to deliver a more integrated and value-adding model for customers/farmers, while creating a more contemporary and customer-focused business-culture.

Key leadership strategies/principles which led to these achievements:

1. It's not about cost, it's about creating and capturing value – concentrate on creating value and ensure that you're capturing it
2. Fail fast and cheap – don't be scared of failure, use it to build success
3. Think big, and dream bigger – don't sweat the small stuff, and create big goals that teams can chase
4. Teams deliver more than individuals – build teams and give them freedom to deliver the goal
5. Never lose sight of the people – our team members are Business NSW'S most important asset; look after them and they'll look after everyone else.

Describe the key challenges you have faced as a business leader and how you overcame them.

Operating a business without ice-cream:

- Restructured business, ensuring acceptable returns-for-farmers while delivering leading regional milk-price
- Grew milk market-share (11.3%) offsetting ice-cream losses (value: \$25M); adding 100 independent-supermarkets as new-distribution points
- Innovated with higher-value products/pivoted capturing market-share with lactose-free milk, as other health-options became too-expensive

- Employee-engagement/transparent communication important, ensuring a workforce motivated by broader purpose/challenge and benefit to the local-community

Ice-cream factory rebuild:

- Post-flood, advocated strongly for needs of BNSW, and wider business-community
- Took various internal/external advocacy measures securing \$46M in government-funding, supporting factory-rebuild
- Delivered Business NSW co-contribution of \$59M (under Anchor-Business-Grant-guidelines) enabling rebuild• Rehired, retrained, inducted 130-employees

Navigating macro-environmental factors:

- Rebuild-process met with various external-challenges including product-shipping/critical electronic-component delays.
- Required readjusted/shortened timelines with customers; factory commissioned in significantly shorter-timeframe and phased production-approach
- Challenges effectively navigated via clear, prompt, transparent communication with stakeholders, and focused/ collaborative decision-making with key decision-makers
- Key to success: bringing key-stakeholders on the 'factory-rebuild-journey', ensuring all realised the importance to the community and broader regional-rebuild effort, while receiving discretionary-effort and buy-in to get the job done

Operating a business in periods of hyper-inflation:

- Energised the business around a commitment to continuous-improvement
- Activated/expedited sustainability goals to remove/reduce waste, energy, water-usage
- Explored different ways to create value (profits) via new/more premium-products• Offset inflationary-pressures via strategic-business decision-making, driving growth/overall-profitability

Supporting farmer-members during hyper-inflation:

- To offset, BNSW maintained industry-leading milk-price for farmers; delivering milk-price of 89.5cpl (\$4.3M annual increase for farmers), supported by brand-growth/business profitability
- Business NSW's National-Farmer-Wellbeing-Report uncovered the significant mental-health impact of financial-pressures on farmers. Key-strategies to combat:• Paying farmers a +15cpl, Christmas-Day bonus recognising their hard work/commitment
- 'Cow-Financing-Scheme'; delivering interest-free-loans to farmers to purchase lactating-cattle, to help grow businesses

Cost-of-living crisis – domestic-goods business:

- For milk-products, limited price-increases resulting in increased market-share. BNSW became the only major milk-brand in growth; and #1 milk-brand in northern NSW/QLD for the first-time ever.

Provide an overview of your five-year goals and strategies for future business growth, detailing how you are working towards achieving them.

Goal: Become Australia's leading dairy-business, providing long-term farmgate value for members by:

Future-Asset Competitiveness: Make Business NSW's assets more contemporary/efficient.

Kick started via Lismore's ice-cream factory rebuild, planning for major-redevelopment of manufacturing-facilities for milk-business, serving future-consumer needs, while creating lower cost-bases ensuring premium-value delivery to farmers/milk-price. Commencing FY25, completed FY26.

Maximising Brand>Returns, Diversifying Revenue-stream: Leveraging brand-value across products/geographies; move to higher-margin/value categories

Increased focus on Business NSW-branded products, creating greater brand-value/returns for farmer-members, versus contract-manufacturing. Continued commitment to industry/product-innovation and investing in creating new-categories of premium dairy-products.

In FY24: Launched higher-value lactose-free products capturing market-share, and continued partnership with Eden-Brew, creators of Australia's first-ever, animal-free dairy, bringing CSIRO-research from laboratory to consumers. Drove growth of branded-milk sales by 11.3% (approx. \$25M), relaunched branded ice-cream nationally (52 SKUs, 10M sales-units, nearly \$40M in gross-sales), added nearly 100 independent-supermarkets as new-distribution points.

FY25, Business NSW to achieve 30% improvement in operating-net-profit, delivered via efficiencies in business-operations/branded-growth through higher-value NPD/improved-distribution.

Enhancing People-Performance: Investing in developing 'People' capability, creating commercial-outcomes

Unlocking potential via leadership-excellence, performance focus, improved/more efficient systems. Includes implementing leadership-development programs (all levels), targeted development-plans and career-path mapping for employees. Introducing 'Reward-and-Recognition' programs aligned to organisational-strategy, while implementing systems promoting employee-wellbeing/support.

Optimising Raw-Material Inputs:

Mitigating volatility/optimising mix and input cost-structures

Across ice-cream and stock-feed businesses, ensuring operational-agility to maximise market opportunities, and reformulate product-base ensuring Business NSW continues delivering lowest-cost/highest-quality products.

FY24: achieved \$1M in cost-reductions across ice-cream/stock-feed businesses. FY25: current activities to deliver another \$1M savings based on application of Business NSW in-house IP.

Corporate Activity and Industry-Rationalisation: Compliment core-business with investments improving scale Business NSW has reviewed several key-acquisitions relating to AgriSolutions and dairy businesses; remains an active participant in future dairy-industry rationalisation, where value can be created for Members. Over the next 5-years, planning at-least one major-acquisition in dairy, and adding four stores to its network.

Outline the reasons why you are an outstanding business leader, including the ways in which you provide mentorship to others.

John is a tenacious, yet empathetic business leader who in equal measure holds a unique and steadfast commitment to: • Creating and driving commercial success • Creating meaningful organisational purpose • Creating highly engaged and highly valued teams; and • A high performing workplace culture

Leading a highly diverse workforce spanning manufacturing, agriculture, retail and commercial, John holds a unique

ability to engage with and genuinely connect with farmers and team-members across the entire business, making him an approachable and effective business-leader that can communicate a vision in a way that achieves buy-in right throughout the organisation.

Below are key proof-points of John's achievements, utilising and implementing his highly respected leadership skills:

Flood-Recovery: Led Business NSW through the 2022 Lismore flood-recovery including:• Recommencement of Lismore ice-cream business• Circa \$100M investment into Northern-Rivers region/economy• As a major regional-employer, secured significant employment (130-jobs); driving considerable economic activity for the region.

Milk-Price: Led Business NSW in increasing milk-price for farmer-members by \$4.3M, delivering cumulative total increases of \$62.3M over 5-years. Flow-on benefits include:• Greater investment into communities• Helping farmers invest in more sustainable/profitable farming-operations• Driving growth/employment in region

Farmers: Via increased milk-price/net-profit, delivered biggest ever financial-returns to members. Over the past five-years, Business NSW has achieved 30% more profit for members, than the past 20 years prior, while paying farmers \$62.3M more each year in increased price adjustments alone. (compared with FY19) and a total \$207.1M in total FY24).

Product: Drove growth of branded-milk sales by 11.3% (approx. \$25M for year). Business NSW relaunched its branded ice-cream nationally, while reimagining the Cape Byron brand. Included developing/launching 52 SKUs during FY24, achieving 10M sales-units, nearly \$40M in gross-sales (from October-2023).

Financial: FY24, drove +12.2% increase in sales-revenue (vs previous year). Over past five-years, drove cumulative net-profit growth of +27.8% more than the preceding 20-years.

Mentorship: John has built an executive team including several people in executive roles for the first time in their careers. He has coached and mentored them to become leaders in their own right, assisting him and the team in delivering commercial results that Business NSW has never experienced before.

Extremely generous with his time, John has weekly-sessions with 15 direct-reports, in addition to regular mentor catch-ups with other team-members to provide career-development support.

Underpinning this are John's two-key leadership philosophies:

- Don't kill performance with kindness – don't shy away from difficult conversations to drive learning and growth
- Responsibility, accountability and reward – all must be equal

Log in to enter.businessnsw.com to see complete entry attachments.

BUSINESS NSW