

**Saturday 26 August**

## **Hunter Business Leaders Crowned**

The region's leading businesses were crowned at the annual Business Hunter Awards celebration, held last night.

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 Acting CEO, Sheena Martin said the event highlighted the vital role businesses play in driving economic growth, innovation and other important outcomes for the region.

"The awards honour those who have redefined success through their exemplary contributions. It's clear from the finalists and winners showcased tonight that we are on an incredibly bright trajectory," said Ms Martin.

Nineteen winners were selected from a cohort of 130 finalists. Ms Martin said the awards had attracted a record number of entries, with applications up 30% on last year.

"It's reassuring that a growing number of businesses have success and achievement to share, despite the challenging environment many find themselves operating in, with pandemic after-effects and unfavourable economic conditions biting hard. It's indicative of the tremendous resilience, innovative spirit, and capacity for problem-solving that exists within the region," said Ms Martin.

The awards included a new category this year - **Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion**, with MGA Thermal claiming the inaugural trophy.

“In addition to celebration and recognition, our awards are a platform for thought leadership and capacity building. Adding the Diversity and Inclusion award this year leans heavily into that idea. MGA Thermal realised they needed to value Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion early on in their journey, and their awards success reflects that commitment,” said Ms Martin.

The major award, **Business of The Year**, was awarded to Camplify.

“Camplify’s rapid growth and international footprint is an exemplar for the region. Despite their growth, their HQ remains here, proving to others on a similar trajectory that you can scale and stay here,” said Ms Martin.

Business Hunter President, Lauren Eyles presented the **President’s Award** to Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service former CEO, Richard Jones OAM.

“The recent tragic accident in the Hunter Valley reminds us of the importance of this service, and the many lives that it touches. Under Richard’s leadership, the service has grown from a small operation to a highly professional charity, delivering world class aero-medical and rescue services. It’s fitting to recognize and celebrate his achievements to date,” said Ms Eyles.

A full list of winners follows:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Winner</b>
Hunter Water Love Water	Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group
Excellence in Micro Business	LH Agenda
Excellence in Small Business	SAPHI
Excellence in Large Business	Hi-Vis Group

Outstanding Community Organisation	Singleton Neighbourhood Centre
Excellence in International Business	Camplify
Outstanding Start-up	Hey Zomi
Excellence in Innovation	Hi-Vis Group
Excellence in Sustainability	Imaginelle
Employer of Choice (under 20 employees)	The Marketing GP
Employer of Choice (over 21 employees)	Hunter Valley Coal Chain Coordinator
Outstanding Local Chamber	Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion	MGA Thermal
Contribution to the Region	PKF Sydney & Newcastle
Outstanding Employee	Dean Reid - Aussie Ark
Kristen Keegan Young Business Leader	Kiraley Martin - LMCC
President's Award	Richard Jones OAM - Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service
Outstanding Business Leader	Justin Hales - Camplify
Business of the Year	Camplify

The Business Hunter Awards are delivered with support from our major partner, the University of Newcastle, as well as AGL, CPA Australia, EDF Renewables, Enigma, Glencore, Hunter Water, IMB Bank, Newcastle Herald, Newcastle Permanent, NSW Minerals Council, Maxim Business Advisors, Port Authority of NSW, Port of Newcastle, Quarry Mining, Skildare, Spirit Super, Umwelt, and Whiteley Corporation.

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