

INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS LAUNCH THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2014

TODD WILLIAMS, CEO RDA HUNTER

WELCOME !!

Thank you for attending RDA Hunter's Hunter Investment Prospectus launch for 2014.

May I firstly acknowledge that we are gathered here today on the Awabakal land and I would like to pay my respects to elders past and present.

I would also like to welcome distinguished guests:

Hon George Souris MP, Member for Upper hunter, Minister for the Hunter

Craig Baumann MP, Member for Port Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Planning

Andrew Cornwell MP, Member for Charlestown, Tim Owen MP, Member for Newcastle,

Hon Robyn Parker MP, Member for Maitland, Minister for Environment and Minister for Heritage.

Members of RDA Hunter Committee – Acting Chair John Tate, Paul Hughes, Geoff Lilliss and Susan Ivens, Maitland City Council Mayor, Cr Peter Blackmore, Upper Hunter Shire Council Mayor , Cr Peter Johnsen and the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Cr Jeff McCloy.

Apologies have been received from:

Greg Piper MP, Member for Lake Macquarie **represented today by Ms Amy de Lore**, Hon Sharon Claydon MP, Federal Member for Newcastle **represented today by Ms Kim Hall**.

Other apologies include Hon Bob Baldwin MP, Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP, Ms Jill Hall MP, Dr David Gillespie MP, Clayton Barr MP, Garry Edwards MP and Sonia Hornery MP.

It is no accident that we are here at Fort Scratchley for this event; this headland has been long associated with Newcastle and the Hunter. Its significance continues as after 99 years the guns have re-started to mark 1pm.

At last year's investment event we launched a video about the Hunter and its strengths. This has been used extensively by businesses to assist in promoting their business. For example, Hunter TAFE adapted it and showed it at the Australia / India conference! Thousands of prospective businesses and students as well as governments learned why the Hunter is an attractive place to do business.

Getting the Hunter's positive messages out and putting us on the map – we have a great story to tell and we are telling it!

RDA Hunter is leading initiatives that will grow and sustain the Hunter's economy long term. We implement a future focused regional agenda that aims to advance innovation, attract investment and strengthen the region's key infrastructure.

The Hunter is on the map, not just as a place to invest in by business but for government. A number of projects have been included on the national infrastructure priority list with both federal and state governments investing in nationally significant infrastructure that will boost economic growth. They know that a solid business case from the Hunter means a solid return on investment. Tourle Street and Scone rail crossing are examples of this and an area that RDA will keep working in for the region.

Today's event is about '**investment**' – investment into the Hunter - it is one of the key priorities for RDA Hunter and one that is vital to the region's future.

We will be launching the Hunter Investment Prospectus as well as 'smart happens here' – two key initiatives to raise interest and drive investment into the region.

Investment does not only come from outside the region – in the Hunter we are investing in our future by investing in ourselves. You may well of heard of the ME program, it is developing a workforce for the future by linking students and industry in innovative ways. RDA's ME program is growing our capacity as a smart region.

No other region in Australia has got a program like ours is something we should all be extremely proud of. Please let me tell you how this is making an impact for the future: over four years;

1. Secondary school participation has increased from 4 schools to 26 schools (a majority of secondary schools in the Hunter) now there have been over 7,500 students have been involved in the program
2. Increased industry participation from 4 to 32. These companies range from small to medium sized technology companies to multi-nationals.
3. Uptake by year 11 students in physics has grown to be now on par with the NSW average!
4. Engineering studies in year 11 continues to increase and is now double the NSW average!
5. If you attend a school that is in the ME program you are twice as likely to undertake engineering studies – this of course increases significantly of these students going onto higher education in this field!
6. Last year for the first time one of our partner schools due to demand offered an extension maths class (3 units)

The ME program is here today – please feel free to find out more

We in the region know how good the Hunter is – we are here – we know.

In order to attract investment we need to be telling our story outside the region. In some cases the Hunter's story is misinterpreted or not known. We have wine, horses, mining and tourism – people generally know that about us.

The Hunter has changed and is changing rapidly. A productive urban, diverse and individual place.

This is why we have developed '**Smart Happens Here**'.

Smart Happens Here is a web based campaign to promote the region's people, environment and culture.

It has been designed to pique interest and encourage people to seek further information about the Hunter as a destination.

It will be promoted nationally and internationally and complements RDA Hunters other initiatives such as the investment prospectus and the innovation scorecard.

RDA Hunter's investment strategy involves raising awareness of the region as an investment location and promoting the Hunter for all its strengths.

Could I please introduce someone who has invested in the hunter – **Peter McLean from the Hunter Valley Distillery** to explain why they invested in the Hunter and how they are using **Smart Happens Here** to promote their business.

Invite guests to use prospectus, smart happens here. Contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you!