LAKE MACQUARIE BUSINESS LIMITED
(ACN 608 585 440)
(**Company**)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2026

I am pleased to present the 2026 President's Report for Lake Macquarie Business Limited. This has been a year of renewal, with a focus on listening to local businesses and building a business network that connects, represents and supports our community.

Membership and Member Value

The Membership Board Report records 56 current members as of 5 November, compared with 40 on 1 July 2026—an increase of 16 members, or 40%, over that period. It also identifies 58 prospects being worked.

These figures provide an encouraging foundation for further growth, while reminding us that retaining and supporting existing members is just as important as attracting new businesses. (Source: Membership Board Report – November 2026).

Our priority is to turn membership into practical value: useful connections, relevant information and opportunities to learn and collaborate. The 2026–2028 Business Plan places member results at the centre of our mission and sets ambitions for growth, retention and a consistent member-event programme.

Lake Macquarie Business Survey Summary (2026)

LMB, with funding from the Eraring Community Investment Fund, engaged Micromex Research to run a survey of Lake Macquarie businesses. It ran from 24 November 2025 to 27 February 2026 and was promoted through flyers with QR codes, events, email, and in-person engagement.

117 businesses responded.

The 2026 Business Survey confirms that the Chamber's strongest role is connecting local businesses and turning those connections into practical growth opportunities.

Most respondents are small, established businesses seeking tangible outcomes. While networking is both the best-known offering (79%) and the leading area of interest (74%), members also identified a need for stronger access to customers and markets (57%), marketing support (51%), and digital marketing skills (44%).

The results highlight a clear opportunity to sharpen our value proposition: improve awareness of services beyond events, use email as the primary communication channel (preferred by 94%), and design networking activities to deliver measurable leads, referrals, partnerships and business growth.

Overall, 88% of respondents expressed interest in at least one program or service, providing a strong foundation for focused member engagement and advocacy in 2026.

Events and Connections

Since November 2025, Lake Macquarie Business has continued to strengthen its commitment to connecting, supporting and promoting businesses across the Lake Macquarie region.

Through local business consultations, regular networking opportunities, professional development activities, and collaborative partnerships, the organisation has given business owners opportunities to connect, share experiences, and access practical support.

A key focus has been engaging with businesses across different communities to better understand their needs and identify growth opportunities.
These activities reflect Lake Macquarie Business's ongoing commitment to building a connected, informed and resilient local business community.

Engagement and Regional Transition

Keeping members informed about regional change remains important. Correspondence during the year included Eraring Community Forum records forwarded for the Lake Macquarie Business website. The August correspondence also highlighted Dantia's work with small and medium businesses around the closure. Our role is to keep local business needs visible and help members connect with relevant information and support. This is in addition to our Collaboration Strategy and working with Dantia and Morisset Business Connect, Link Up Lake Macquarie and Lake Macquarie Women in Business.

Funding and Organisational Sustainability

External funding remains an important part of building the organisation's capacity. An earlier Eraring Community Investment Fund application was unsuccessful, and feedback was requested in June. In September, we circulated revised proposals for review ahead of a further application deadline. We will know later in November if we were successful.

The 2026–2028 Business Plan sets goals for membership retention, income growth, administrative support and external funding. Our task is to translate that ambition into a sustainable operating model, supported by clear reporting and realistic delivery commitments.

Business to Business Expo

Positives and achievements. The LMB Expo, held on 21 October 2026, provided a valuable opportunity to bring local businesses together, showcase local expertise and strengthen connections across our business community. Board and support-member feedback highlighted the quality and relevance of the speakers, the professional presentation of the exhibition stalls and the practical value of the hands-on AI workshop. The Small Business Month partnership, Service NSW support and involvement of supporting partners helped establish a strong platform for the event.

Benefits for members and participants. Feedback reported meaningful conversations, new relationships and business leads, alongside access to relevant economic insights, government support information and practical learning. The AI workshop attracted 21 participants, with the facilitator reporting seven five-star Google reviews. Positive comments from participants and interest in returning from exhibitors, sponsors and supporting organisations provide an encouraging basis for continued engagement.

A foundation for next year. The Expo leaves us with established relationships, practical event experience, and planning tools to build on. The run sheet, shared task record, regular planning meetings and automated exhibitor information offer a useful starting point for a more coordinated approach. Earlier planning and promotion, clear responsibilities and a programme that protects time for networking will help translate these foundations into a stronger event next year. The focus should be on retaining relevant speakers and practical learning while strengthening participation and value for members, exhibitors and partners.

We thank everyone who contributed to the Expo, including our speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, supporting organisations, board members and event supporters. Their involvement created opportunities for local businesses to connect and provided a positive foundation for the year ahead.

Priorities for 2027

Building on the Business Plan, I propose that our priorities for the coming year remain clear: strengthen member retention and engagement; deliver a consistent programme of relevant events and business support; pursue partnerships and funding without overstating unconfirmed outcomes; and improve the administrative capacity and reporting needed to support sustainable growth. We should measure our success not simply by activity, but by the value our members receive. 2026–2028 Business Plan.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of Lake Macquarie Business, I thank our Board, members, volunteers, sponsors and partner organisations for their support throughout 2026. The time, ideas and energy contributed to our business community are greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank outgoing board members Malcolm Druce, Emma Murphy and Alex Murray.

I look forward to continuing our work together in 2027, building a connected and supportive business community across Lake Macquarie.



Michael Huggett
President