

The BUSINESS

JOURNAL
VOLUME 15



TOOWOOMBA
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



2022 FOCUS HR BUSINESS OF THE YEAR



Special Edition: FOCUS HR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2022

MEET FOCUS HR
Naming Rights Partner

RESULTS
Find out who the winners are

SOCIALS
Great pics from Launch, Finalists Event and BEA Night

plus
people, projects, produce and lots more

WHY JOINING CHAMBER MAKES GOOD SENSE FOR

Tourism & Hospitality Businesses

The Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce & Dine Darling Downs have joined forces to promote our food tourism and hospitality sector taking locals and visitors alike on a journey of the best places to eat, play and stay in Toowoomba and the Darling Downs.

The collaboration is a perfect opportunity to further celebrate and promote our region locally, nationally, and internationally as an outstanding foodie destination.

The Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce is Toowoomba's largest, most well established business community. The Dine Darling Downs Digital Platform includes a website / directory with an ever growing list of places to try and of course Social Media channels dedicated solely to good food & dining inspo.

Here are just some of the benefits of joining Chamber:

- Be a part of and engage with Toowoomba's largest business community (530+ Member Businesses)
- Make connections at our monthly networking events (150+ attendees regularly)
- Invitation to members only events
- Support and representation at all levels of government
- Opportunity to participate in advisory groups
- Directed introductions to other member businesses
- Ability to share specials, member2member offers and promote events on the Chamber website
- Social media callout through the Chambers channels
- Listing in Toowoomba Chamber Directory
- Advertising in the quarterly Business Journal at member rates



JOIN TODAY

Membership is fully tax deductible

Bonus Dine Darling Downs Membership!

At no extra cost you receive Dine Darling Downs Membership too including:

- Your business listed in the Dining Guide Directory on the Dine Darling Downs website, check it out at www.dinedarlingdowns.com.au
- Monthly Social Media mentions of your business on Dine Darling Downs Facebook and Instagram - the largest digital food platform in the region
- An opportunity to promote your business via an article / blog on the Dine Darling Downs Website - let us tell your story

For more information contact Lucas Wegener 0450 386 575



Dining Guide

Check out our easy to use Directory for the best places to eat, drink, stay this weekend!



dinedarlingdowns.com.au

Cost:

Per year Based on number of full time equivalent employees

Sole Trader	\$203
Micro Business	
2 to 4 Employees.....	\$407
Small Business Level One	
5 to 10 Employees.....	\$580
Small Business Level Two	
11 to 19 Employees.....	\$866
Medium Business Level One	
20 to 50 Employees	\$1031

OUR VALUED *Partners*

Naming Rights Partner.....



Gold Partners.....



Silver Partners.....



Bronze Partners.....



PRESIDENT'S *message*



Showcasing your business was our claim - and didn't we pull it off in style?!

With marching bands, ringmasters, jugglers, acrobats, clowns and dancing girls, the 2022 Business Excellence Awards created a sense of excitement, anticipation and recognition for everyone who attended the event on the first Saturday in November.

Rumours looked its best with beautiful lights, stilt walkers and a merry go round, thrilling the gorgeous and glittering attendees from the moment they stepped onto the red carpet. With 600 people coming from far and wide to reflect on the extraordinary successes and achievements of so many businesses, once again our region punched above its weight with such skills and accomplishments on display.

With quality beverages and delicious food sourced from local suppliers, guests enjoyed Harrison Humphries as our talented ringmaster MC, St

Mary's Brass Band singing 'The Greatest Show' and the death-defying skills of the Cassus Circus troupe.

Warwick Agnew, Director General of the Dept of Employment, Small Business and Training (representing Minister Di Farmer), reiterated the significance of the Chamber's contribution to small businesses in the region and affirmed the positive impact of our 16,000 strong SMEs on the economy of Queensland.

On behalf of the Board, I want to congratulate each business who submitted an Award Application, each business who was shortlisted and each of the finalists: when the pool is so talented, the choice is very challenging!

Amidst much excitement, the announcement of the coveted Business of the Year Award went

to Excavation Equipment, our CEO recognised X Factor Plumbing for their resilience and our 2023 Hall of Fame entrant was the fabulous Hogan's Family Jewellers!

Once more, we have enjoyed partnering with Naming Rights Sponsor, Focus HR, sharing in the delight of the evening (as well as the work in the lead up) and honouring of the Toowoomba Business Community.

Finally, I also want to highlight the remarkable commitment, passion and efforts of Chamber's staff who went above and beyond ensuring the night was an outstanding opportunity to celebrate, recognise and applaud business excellence. Thank you to Todd, Jo, Lucas, Georgia and Anna!

KATE VENABLES

President Toowoomba Chamber



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Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, the Jagera, Giabal and Jarowair people. We extend that respect to the elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures and the hopes of Australia's First Peoples.

The BUSINESS | JOURNAL VOLUME 15



TOOWOOMBA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Send your story ideas and submissions to communications@toowoombachamber.com.au

Editorial team: Todd Rohl and Ally Martell with assistance from Lucas Wegener. Graphic Design by Danielle Chimes, printing by Greenridge Group

ON THE COVER

Alistair Green (far left) and Naomi Wilson (far right) of Focus HR on stage with the Business of the Year 2022 winners, Excavation Equipment.

TOOWOOMBA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

353 Ruthven Street,
(Access via Russell Street)
Toowoomba Qld 4350

PO Box 3629,
Toowoomba
Queensland 4350

PH 07 4638 0400
ABN 78 423 372 476

Office Hours:
8:30am - 4:30pm
Monday to Friday



The Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce is one of Queensland's largest regional Chambers. Together we represent a significant voice and as a group we can make a positive difference for our local business community. Contact our Chamber team today to learn more on how we can help you. We work for business. Email: admin@toowoombachamber.com.au



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Until you've harnessed the power of your team, your business will not reach its full potential.

You can copy machines, IT systems, procedures, software etc. What you can't copy is your people, your team and your culture. This is why it is inimitable.

And everything is driven at some point by a human being. There are human touch points along every service or product delivery journey. And of course, because they are human, they have the highest potential for human error. But that's why, if you get your people practices right, you are also tapping into the single greatest opportunity to create unique strength in your business.

Powerful is a key word here. Your people are powerful. When you are effective in guiding and empowering them as a leader, you are realising your own power.

We often miss this point. Managers often seek authority in a position title and then hire people 'beneath' them. This is all too often coupled with a scarcity mentality – a need to protect their position and their knowledge. But leaders truly realise their own power by having great people working with them and enabling them to reach their potential.

Focus HR's Moonshot Goal is to have a positive impact on the working lives of 100,000 people by 2030. The team knows that training business leaders to treat their people like they are valuable and inimitable results in winning cultures and thriving businesses.

This is why Focus HR have chosen to sponsor the Business Excellence

“ People are the most valuable, inimitable asset in your business. ”

Naomi Wilson



Awards for the last three years and why we started the Employer of Choice Awards in 2018.

We believe in our local businesses, and we absolutely believe that Toowoomba has the potential to impact the

world from our little corner of southeast Queensland. Look at what we have achieved already!

As we continue to work together to build each other up, to support each other and to commit to excellence, we

know that our business community is destined for amazing things.

Thank you to the Chamber of Commerce for hosting these awards and in turn, supporting our business community. We look forward to an incredible year in 2023. And now it's time to take a breath, relax, and celebrate! Cheers!

in·im·it·able

[ɪˈnɪmɪtəb(ə)l]

ADJECTIVE

inimitable (adjective)

so good or unusual as to be impossible to copy; unique:
"they took the charts by storm with their inimitable style"

SIMILAR: unique distinctive individual special idiosyncratic quirky exclusive
rare incomparable unparalleled unrivalled matchless unmatched peerless

SCA

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LISTNR



Scan the QR code to boost your business!



IT'S TIME TO SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE

WINNERS

AGRICULTURE

**Clayton's
Organic Beef**

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BEST REGIONAL
BUSINESS

Joe Wagner Group

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COMMUNITY &
NOT FOR PROFIT

**Breakaway
Toowoomba**

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EMPLOYER
OF CHOICE

Joe Wagner Group

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FUTURE LEADER
OF THE YEAR

Gregory Riehl

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



GERRY DOUMANY
EXPORT AWARD

**Excavation
Equipment**

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HEALTH
& WELLBEING

Demi International

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



HOSPITALITY

4 Brothers Brewing

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INDUSTRY

ALE Group

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



INNOVATION &
TECHNOLOGY

**Darling Fresh
Smoke Haus**

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES

Vigour Graphics

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



RETAIL

**Hogans Family
Jewellers**

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



TOURISM

**Quest Toowoomba
Apartment Hotel**

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



SOLE TRADER
OF THE YEAR

Stirling & Truffles

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



MICRO BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR

ParisiAnn Patisserie

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



PEOPLE'S CHOICE

**The Grove
Country Gardens**

CATEGORY SPONSORED BY



2022 BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Excavation Equipment

2022 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Hogans Family Jewellers

2022 CEO'S AWARD

X Factor Plumbing



**BUSINESS
EXCELLENCE
AWARDS**

#focushrbea22

PRESENTED BY:



TOOWOOMBA
CHAMBER

FOCUS HR *Business of the Year*

Proudly sponsored by: **focus HR**
People | Leadership | Strategy

Winner

EXCAVATION EQUIPMENT



From humble beginnings, Excavation Equipment (EXEQ) has grown around Matt and Catherine Ardi's kitchen table.

It all started in 2012 when they began hiring out a few items to now offering a range of services including sale of plant and machinery, onsite auctions, import/export and logistics. Their business growth also includes new locations on the Gold Coast and in Melbourne.

Over the past ten years, General Manager, Catherine, swapped her high heels for high viz and her business banking career for her husband's dream.

"In those early days, I didn't know the difference between a

tilt tray and a side tipper!" said Catherine. "So, Matt worked in the business, and I worked on it.

"Looking back, we could never have imagined how much we'd grow. But our commitment was always to be responsive to the needs of the crushing and earthmoving industry while also looking after our staff. We have 23 staff members now across all aspects of the business from operations and admin to diesel mechanics, yardies and road train operators. Make no mistake, the people in this business have and always will be

high priorities to us because they are the secret to our success."

Like any business EXEQ has had its ups and downs but how any team overcomes challenges is often what sets them apart and what makes them excellent.

Catherine said the first two years of business were by far the hardest.

"We continued as we created a dream together building a sustainable business for the future. Sustainability and excavation equipment, hire and sales, may sound like they don't





go together, however, we always ensured that our machines were low emission and that a portion of profits went back to the local community.

“We made sure our staff were paid before we were, and sometimes we were late on our rent or wouldn’t replace a tyre on our vehicles to save money. It’s quite a funny joke still to this day how I drove around on a space saver tyre for months and had to pump it up every second time I drove anywhere. These were the sacrifices we just had to make, and I wouldn’t change it for anything as I believe it builds character and also demonstrates clearly that your priority is the business and the people who work for you.

“We’re lucky to have amazing people in our business who treat their roles with the utmost integrity: they treat Excavation Equipment as if it were their own. It’s a great privilege to lead a team, and I take responsibility for their professional and personal growth.”

EXEQ has been entering the Business Excellence Awards since 2015 and has enjoyed considerable success along the way.

“Some years we’ve picked up a category win, and sometimes we’ve

been a finalist but either way, EXEQ was happy to just be there and be counted among the business community. The awards night has always been a way the whole team can get frocked up and celebrate being part of EXEQ but also for each staff member to be acknowledged as part of the bigger picture. Without the staff, we are nothing - just a name. So, it’s important we are all recognised, and the BEA does just that.

“Putting pen to paper in the application process is more than just ticking a box, its understanding your vision and your boldest ambitions for the future and the HOW of how the plan will pan out. It’s the most powerful tool in the whole process and worth investing in as it will translate into all areas of your business planning.”

“Being Business of the Year is humbling and truly meaningful to each and every one of us. Being recognised by your peers in a community that you hold so dear, there is no better feeling.”

CATHERINE ARDI

Catherine’s personal beliefs on being in business:

Remember that you have an impact on the people you meet. Emotional intelligence and making people feel good, inspired, appreciated, etc. is the most important intelligence of all.

Women need to sing their praises more. Don’t downplay your achievements. If you don’t sing your praises, no one else will.

Don’t be afraid of confrontation—mindful honesty is constructive. Don’t suppress when you can express!

Demand Respect — you deserve it. It is your birthright

See also page 27. Excavation Equipment also won the Gerry Doumany Export Award



Proudly supporting local business

We're actively supporting small businesses across our Region.

Small businesses are at the heart of our community as they create regional jobs and support the local economy while providing essential goods and services.

We've joined the Small Business Friendly Council's (SBFC) initiative, partnering with the Queensland Small Business Commissioner. This initiative is our commitment to being mindful of small businesses when making community decisions. Over the past 12 months, we have achieved the following:

- Provided \$39,000 of funding to not-for-profit community organisations through the Community Economic Development Grant Program for projects that benefit local businesses.
- Funded the delivery of the Digital Marketing Mentoring Program and the Build a Better Business Workshops that are designed to increase small business digital capacity.
- Subsidised participants to undertake the Digital Solutions Program to assist small businesses to make the most out of digital tools.
- Collaborated with Local and State government departments to deliver procurement talks, including a capability workshop for local businesses to encourage them to become government and large project suppliers. Participants said that the capability workshop helped them understand how to approach tendering opportunities.
- Partnered with the Queensland Government to host the Growing Queensland Business Roadshow to assist local businesses in understanding and spotting procurement opportunities and provide one-on-one advice from Council's procurement officers.
- Created the Business Advocate newsletter to promote training opportunities, upcoming tenders and helpful resources for small businesses.



If you would like to become a supplier with us, you can register your interest on VendorPanel Marketplace for free. VendorPanel is a site where many local governments, including us, share their tenders.

For more information, visit www.tr.qld.gov.au/suppliers

2022 Winner



Best Regional Business

Joe Wagner Group, originally Joe Wagner Earthmoving, was founded by Joe and Mary Wagner in 1985 to service Toowoomba and the surrounding districts. Starting from humble beginnings as a plant hire business, JWG now delivers high-quality construction outcomes in

civil construction, rail, drainage, and earthmoving whilst maintaining a comprehensive and modern fleet of equipment and machinery.

Directors Nick and Jim Wagner have carried on the family tradition of maintaining a focus on giving back to

Proudly sponsored by:



the communities in which we operate and adhering to our four pillars of Support, Lifestyle, Pride and Value. Over the years, it has been their ability to communicate well, get the job done to a high standard and their hands-on approach that has earned Joe Wagner Group the loyalty of our clients and the respect of our peers.

With 35 years' experience and based in the Darling Downs, we have demonstrated capability and expertise in the industry; operating right across Queensland and into Northern NSW delivering civil construction projects in full and on time.



2022 Finalists

in Alphabetical Order:

Excavation Equipment

★ **Joe Wagner Group**

Tentworld

Vigour Graphics



BUSINESS
RESILIENCE CENTRE

**Strengthening
our business
community.**

Focusing On Wellbeing

The mental health of employees strongly influences workplace culture which directly impacts workplace productivity.

Business Resilience Centre offers an affordable pay-per-use Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to support positive mental health and wellbeing of staff.

Supporting people experiencing:

- Work-related issues (including adjusting to change, bullying, trauma and managing conflict)
- Financial and legal referral
- Emotional stress, anxiety, conflict, tension and depression
- Child and family issues
- Health and lifestyle issues (including drugs, alcohol and gambling)
- Grief and bereavement
- Separation, divorce or relationship difficulties
- Personal trauma

The benefits of workplace EAP include:

- Improved work performance and productivity
- Reduced absenteeism
- Increase staff retention
- Resolution of work-related conflict or other issues

Business Resilience Centre's EAP services include:

- Confidential short-term counselling
- Onsite critical incident response
- Workplace mediation

Our EAP supports all clients in an inclusive environment that welcomes diversity, including all religious and spiritual beliefs, relationships and family structures.

**Contact Business Resilience Centre on
help@businessresilience.org.au | 1300 338 277**

Business Resilience Centre is a Social Enterprise initiative of CatholicCare Social Services

2022 Winner

Greg Riehl



Future Leader of the Year

“I wanted to show that with hard work you can make things happen – I left school early but did a 180-degree change. If I can do it, anyone can.”

Greg Riehl is a career changer and a shining example of how to do it well.

“There’s always been pressure to find your career from a young age,” he said. “But a lot of people don’t know what they want to do with their lives, and they don’t know how to chase their dreams. I want to show that, if you want to, you can change career and find success in a new industry any time.”

Greg left school after Year 10 to pursue a career as a signwriter but five years later, he was ready for more. He did a prep year at University of Southern Queensland and then completed a Bachelor of Business/Commerce – three subjects a semester while working full-time. Now, that’s hard work! But Greg was focussed and enjoyed learning. He then worked as a junior and intermediate accountant with firms around town before joining the director team and equity partners Hot Property, with Leon and Jacob Carlile, heading up their finance and human resources.

While Greg’s skills are in finance, HR and strategy at Hot Property, he also runs Hey Marketing with his wife Madeline. In addition, Greg sits on the board of Highlands Christian College and actively volunteers in multiple capacities.

Greg believes it’s Important to understand the why before the how.

“I am not afraid to ask questions and find out what’s important to people; staff and clients. I want to know why they do things the way they do, what’s driving them and what can I learn from that.

“I am also not afraid to ask for help – like what the heck should I do here! I’m lucky to have mentors through the business and my church who I can ask for advice. Sometimes a chat over coffee with the right person is all you need.

“I know what I’m good at and I stay in my lane, then I surround myself with great people whose strengths compliment my short-comings, so I’m not carrying the whole weight on my shoulders and that those parts of the job are done better than I could have,” he said.

His philosophy is paying off and the future is looking very bright for

Proudly sponsored by:



Hot Property which was recently listed in the Financial Review Fast Starter companies at 38/100.

“We will continue to invest in people and expand our business by offering additional services that will enhance our client experience.”

Greg’s advice to anyone considering entering the FLOTY... “Do it!”

“It’s a great opportunity to get feedback. It’s also good to take a step back and look at what you’re doing. Whether you win or not, you’ll find something to be proud of.”

**2022
Finalists**

Betty Appleby

★ **Greg Riehl**

Matt Ryan

Molly Bell

Peter Rowe



breakaway

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CONTACT US

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 www.breakawaytmba.org

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2022
Hogan's Family Jewellers

Hall of Fame
INDUCTEE
2022



- 2021:** Rows
- 2020:** Tilly's Crawler Parts
- 2019:** St Vincent's Private Hospital
- 2018:** Stahmann Farms Enterprises
- 2017:** Hutchinson Builders
- 2016:** Cracker Print and Paper
- 2015:** Taylor's Removals and Storage
- 2014:** Weis
- 2013:** Betros Bros
- 2012:** FK Gardner & Sons
- 2011:** Empire Theatre
- 2010:** Wagners
- 2009:** Russell Mineral Equipment
- 2008:** Darling Downs Brick Sales
- 2007:** Burstows
- 2006:** Hannas Department Store
- 2005:** Orford Refrigeration
- 2004:** The Chronicle
- 2004:** Clive Berghofer Admin
- 2004:** Heritage Bank
- 2004:** USQ





Hall of Fame
Inductee 2022



Hall of Fame Inductee 2022

Hogan's Family Jewellers is a magical, sparkly place that brims with the creativity and passion of its extraordinary staff. Its reputation for unique designs, quality collections, honest advice and service began 78 years ago and has continued through three generations of the Hogan family. Today it is a destination store attracting visitors from all over Queensland.

The first Hogan's jewellery store was founded in 1945 by Jack and Madeleine Hogan. Madeline had so loved her job in the fine jewellery department of David Jones, Sydney that she convinced husband Jack to open their own bricks-and-mortar store in Griffith and Leeton, New South Wales.

Typical of any family business, it was all hands on deck with Jack and Madeline's children Pam, Jane, Patricia, Michael, Paul and Peter taking turns to work in the store. Jane completed a watchmaking degree while Paul was the first and only sibling to complete a jewellery apprenticeship with TAFE Queensland in 1981.

Paul and Peter acquired the Toowoomba store in the late 1980s when Jack and Madeline retired. Many will remember Peter who greeted customers for more than three decades. He was store manager through the late 70s, 80s, 90s and early 2000s but sadly passed away in 2003.

Paul and Rowena Hogan took full ownership of Hogan's Family Jewellers and continued to grow the business while always generously

giving back to the local community. Paul and Rowie are semi-retired now working mostly as ambassadors for the business while the baton is passed to their children Lachy and Caitlin.

As Managing Director, Lachlan wears many hats. He still designs and creates jewellery but also oversees operations and supports the community through various charity events. His jewellery skills were learned through TAFE at Southbank in Brisbane and apprenticeship under the guidance of Hogan's senior jeweller, Time Peckham. Lachy has also extended his skills completing two design courses with Le Arti Orafe and Alessandro Dari in Florence, Italy.

Caitlin is the youngest member of the Hogan family to join the business and she is enjoying her new role as marketing executive.

Lachy and Caitlin recently launched Hogan's new showroom and state-of-the-art workshop. This gives them the capability to keep up with the ongoing demands of a growing business. They have plans to continue to expand the customer base outside the Darling Downs region,

and this includes establishing an E-commerce arm to the business.

The fact that Hogans won the BEA Retail Category in 2021 and 2022 is testament to its staff whose hard work and loyalty does not go unnoticed! When Jack and Madeline started out in business they employed four staff. Currently, Hogan's Family Jewellers is proud to employ ten qualified jewellers, two diamond setters, three jewellery apprentices and seven highly passionate sales consultants. Staff from Australia, South Africa, Italy, Sri Lanka and the Philippines ensure there are no limits to what can be achieved by sharing techniques and influencing creative flair. With the support of their talented team, Lachy and Caitlin are looking forward to a very bright future for Hogan's Family Jewellers.



WE ARE SO PROUD TO BE THE SPONSORS OF THE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE CATEGORY.

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2022 Winner



Employer of Choice Award

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Joe Wagner Group recognises that its strength comes from its people. We take great pride in our team and our professional service.

We hold high family values and are committed to safety, quality of life and training. With our hands-on management approach, we ensure that the Joe Wagner Group team members are appreciated as individuals and not just corporate statistics.

Our investment in staff training ensures that operational staff have the required tickets and most hold QR SARC (Safely Access Rail Corridor) certification. Our staff come from various trade backgrounds—forming a reliable, knowledgeable and effective team.

Our senior employees bring with them a depth of knowledge that allows them to think on their feet when faced with unexpected conditions on site. We are known for responding quickly and effectively to difficult situations to ensure that jobs remain on time despite changing circumstances. Our company's civil engineers have expertise in the major-projects market, thus bringing sound experience and knowledge of the performance requirements for large infrastructure projects.



Power Tynan



2022 Finalists

in Alphabetical Order:

★ Joe Wagner Group

NRG Services

Power Tynan

Proterra Group



YOUR EXTENSIVE TRADE SERVICES COMPANY

ELECTRICAL
HVAC-R
CONSTRUCTION
COMMUNICATIONS & DATA
FIRE DETECTION
AUTOMATION & INTEGRATION
SECURITY SYSTEMS
HIGH VOLTAGE INSTALLATIONS
& MAINTENANCE

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE
SOLAR & BATTERY STORAGE
SYSTEMS
ENERGY MANAGEMENT &
POWER QUALITY
ENERGY INITIATIVES &
SUSTAINABILITY
CONSULTING, DESIGN &
ENGINEERING



BRISBANE | TOOWOOMBA | ROMA

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2022 Winner

breakaway
TOOWOOMBA



Community and Not-for-Profit Award

Proudly sponsored by:



Words by Pradeep Kanagasabai

Why our business is excellent

Breakaway Toowoomba has been around for over 36 years here in Toowoomba, starting out as a small family-based organisation providing respite for children with disabilities. Since then we have grown and diversified our business to include respite, independent living, community participation, in-home support, social groups and NDIS access support, employing over 130 local staff.

More recently we have been working with people transitioning from the hospital, waiting for NDIS funding to move back to their community, and emergency respite for children with disabilities needing out-of-home care.

We have made the local government area of Toowoomba our priority and our focus these last 12 months has been to establish quality infrastructure to ensure we have our quality and safety right, and to become an employer of choice for the disability and care industry.

How is the application process beneficial to business?

The application process was so much more than simply filling in a form or procuring votes in a popularity competition. The application process included a detailed response to key selection criteria about what we do, and how we support our clients, workforce and our community and businesses within it. This process facilitated reflection on all the 'good stuff' we do here at Breakaway and being able to share that was a real pleasure.

What does the win mean for your staff and customers

This win for Breakaway confirms that we are on the right track in how we are delivering services and supporting our workforce. I am so thrilled to be part of an organisation that has taken out this award. It has been a significant effort from the team and I thank them for their dedication

and support. To be recognized in this way by the Toowoomba business sector is a real privilege.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about entering next year

Think about all the good things you do as an organisation. Really set a plan for your future as a business and have a long-term goal in mind aside from the short-term easy wins. Set the path and make the plan to set you on the journey. Once you can articulate where you want to go you can then figure out how you will get there.

Future plans

Breakaway will be relocating to new premises at 3 Bell Street in December 2022. Watch this space because big things are on the horizon for us and we are excited and motivated to be the best we can be in all that we do.



2022 Finalists

- ★ Breakaway Toowoomba
- Community Access Care
- Lifeline Darling Downs & South West QLD
- Vanguard Laundry



Celebrating 10 years **OF GROWTH IN OUR REGION**



This year marks Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise's tenth year, with the occasion marked in December with a party at Walton Stores. The event was an opportunity to recognise the tremendous achievements of our region across the last decade, and a chance to look to the future and the wonderful opportunity on our doorstep.

The evening was a demonstration of the collaborative nature of the diverse and vibrant business community of our region, and proof that regional

advocacy to promote and facilitate investment into our communities is a cause that benefits everyone at every level. The evening celebrated regional achievements across infrastructure, energy, agriculture, highlighting developments like the second range crossing, Wellcamp Airport, CBD developments, growth in traditional and renewable energy, export opportunities, ag technologies, and manufacturing. Economic growth, opportunity, industry, and business development means nothing

without people. The night was a wonderful celebration of the people and amazing things achieved!

Toowoomba, the Western Downs and the Maranoa would have to be the most exciting region in Australia in terms of growth and investment. TSBE is delighted to have had the opportunity to work closely with our members to connect them to opportunities – and it is something we are looking forward to continuing and growing into the future.

2022 Winner



Gerry Doumany Export Award

Excavation Equipment (EXEQ) has always been committed to the needs of the crushing and earthmoving industry. Its success over the past ten years has opened up opportunities to import and export machinery. It's great to see that this arm of the business is officially recognised as "excellent" too.

General Manager of EXEQ, Catherine Ardi, is excited about the growth and future potential of exporting heavy machinery.

"It's been a steep learning curve but, once again, we are incredibly grateful to our export team – all three of them - and the leaps and bounds they have made since we began this sector of the business in 2012.

"We have experience in all aspects of international freight and logistics which enables us to provide our customers with the best possible transportation solutions," she said.

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EXEQ has a wide range of earthmoving equipment that helps customers move, dig, crush and store to their requirements. The company is providing export customers with everything from high construction to mining and quarries.

"We also dismantle machinery, pack all parts and equipment into containers and we can transport containers direct to the port with our own road trains."

Catherine said EXEQ has been exporting mostly to United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan but had developed a network of reliable service contractors and established partnerships that stretches worldwide.

Note: This award is named after export industry leader, Gerry Doumany, who worked with TSBE for many years supporting export businesses in our region. Gerry passed away in 2021.



MILTON & KING



2022 Finalists

★ Excavation Equipment

Hogans Family Jewellers

Milton & King

Mort & Co

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2022 Winner



demi international
Inspiring futures, nurturing possibilities



Health & Wellbeing Award

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After many years of having a steady job and career in the financial services space for Suncorp, Ann Donnarumma, Chief Executive Officer of Demi International, decided to take another chance and double down on herself and bought her first beauty salon – embracing her love for anything and everything to do with beauty. But even that wasn't easy, working full time in her job and dedicating evenings to her salon.

After selling her salon in 2012, Ann had the opportunity to acquire the Demi International Beauty Academy. Sounds crazy for a girl who left Bundaberg at the age of 17. This is the spirit of passion and drive that heads up Demi International to this day. "It's not as if I wasn't scared every single day, but I remembered that courage isn't the absence of fear - its feeling fear and moving forward anyway. Just take one step forward every day. The celebrations along the way are what make it worth it."

If you have a passion for beauty, fashion, health, and wellness, Demi International is the place for you - live your best life doing what you love.

Fast forward to 2022, Demi International offers nationally accredited qualifications in beauty therapy, makeup artistry, hairdressing,

barbering, remedial massage, nails and yoga at six campuses throughout south-east Queensland.

Demi International Toowoomba has been part of the community for many years. Demi staff are passionate about teaching the next generation and passing on their knowledge to create industry-ready individuals. They meet their quality standards by maintaining a working role in industry: three of the Demi International Toowoomba trainers have their own businesses within the Toowoomba community. And Demi's remedial massage trainer has been recognised in the private health system, specialising in lymphatic massage.

Demi International has a strong reputation in the Toowoomba personal services and education communities. Demi seeks to build on its reputation, as evidenced in its new website www.demiinternational.edu.au, that was redesigned based on user experience principals and direct student involvement. The students said they enjoy flexible study and payment options, that balance work, life, and parenting commitments. Term durations have been designed around school terms to allow our school-aged learners to maintain their schooling

schedule and mature students to continue their parental duties.

Demi's partnership with Netball Queensland and local netball clubs is rooted in understanding the communities we operate in. Demi International is a female dominated and empowering brand that promotes the success of women and encourages them to pursue their dreams –in educating themselves.

Entry into the Toowoomba Business Excellence Awards in 2022 was part of our campaign to reconnect with community. We wanted to showcase our brand, as well as the training opportunities we provide that ultimately support the growth of small businesses in Toowoomba. Graduates go on to opening their own salons or fulfilling jobs that are highly in demand and on the skills shortage lists, within their community.

As a team winning the Business Excellence Awards was genuinely a highlight – not only for Toowoomba but for the business as a whole and something we have been so proud to share with our other campuses.



2022 Finalists

Classic Beauty Therapy

★ Demi International

Radiance Dance Academy

Semloh Support Services

Stephen Henry
Optometry

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2022 Winner



Hospitality Award

Proudly sponsored by:



Words by owner Josie Cubit

Tell us a bit about your business and why it is excellent.

Adrian started 4 Brothers Brewing in a very small space on Brooke Street about five years ago. It was there that he created our Toowoomba Lager and Toowoomba Mid and a raft of other flagship, award-winning beers. Our small brewery was popular but Adrian was constantly brewing to keep up with demand and as we canned beers by hand, Saturday mornings meant the kids forming a family production line.

Since moving to 185 Margaret Street, about 18 months ago, things have really changed. We now have a full kitchen and much larger equipment. From a business perspective, we have expanded our clientele and we can also cater for large events.

Why did you enter the awards this year?

This was the first time we have entered and we decided to do it because we wanted to experience the application process. We honestly didn't imagine winning - it was totally unexpected (and really, really awesome!).

How was the application process useful for your business?

The process was a little daunting at first, because there were a lot of questions about parts of the business that we hadn't formally sat down and discussed. To really think about the questions, discuss them and succinctly answer them was actually one of the best things we've ever done for the business. It forced us to take a good look at the business and put everything down in writing so it was mentally cemented.

What does the win mean for your staff and customers?

The win means so much! Especially that our peers in the business community also see our potential which gives us confidence to stay our course, stick to our business ethos and keep doing what we're doing. We have already leveraged the win with our marketing and that's been great. It has also given us the confidence to be more visible on social media.

What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about entering next year?

Do it. Just going through the application process itself is so worth it.

Future plans?

This win has inspired us to work more collaboratively with other businesses. We look forward to working together, supporting each other and coming up with creative ways to build success. I'm also super keen to brew a few beers myself - and be the first female brewer in Toowoomba (I have a bit to learn yet though).



2022 Finalists

★ 4 Brothers Brewery

George Banks Rooftop Restaurant

Rosalie House Cellar

Door Restaurant

Toowoomba Sports Club

Quest Toowoomba

Apartment Hotel



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RME is a unique company that invent mill relining systems and provide solutions for problems encountered in the world's mining and mineral processing industries. RME has grown from a very small company of one to more than 450 personnel globally across 12 international Sales and Service Centres.

Award-winning Australian exporter, RME is a global employer of choice, focussed on providing a work environment that maximises each team member's full potential through employee engagement and professional development opportunities.

2022 Winner



Industry Award

Proudly sponsored by:



Words by Campbell Lane, Direction

Why did you enter the awards this year?

ALE entered the awards to showcase the company's ability to brand businesses across so many platforms, inhouse - and it's all made locally.

Was the application process helpful for your business?

The application process was very informative as it made us concentrate on strategic parts of our company that we had not concentrated on for a long period of time.

What does the win mean for your staff and customers?

Winning the award has really enforced to our staff their ability and their passion for our industry, we have really saturated our win through our social media platforms

and praised staff for their continued effort and ability to deliver each and every day. Our current exposure of winning this award has opened a lot of doors to new business we would probably not have received.

What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about entering next year?

Take the time to analyse your business and have a go, if not for your own pride, do it for your staff to be recognised for their effort in your business.

What does the future hold for ALE?

We are focused on expanding our premises again to accommodate new technology in 2023. The future is very exciting for ALE.



2022 Finalists

★ ALE Group

Darling Fresh Smoke Haus
Joe Wagner Group
Ryan's Hagan Furniture

Congratulations



Tilly's is proud to sponsor the Innovation and Technology Award again in 2022.

Tilly's has been a proud Toowoomba business for over 38 years.

We believe that without innovation, our businesses may succeed, but may never reach their full potential. We celebrate and congratulate Darling Fresh Smokehaus for their courage and commitment to innovate and grow an amazing business.

We wish them all the very best for a bright future.



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tillys.com.au

2022 Winner



Innovation and Technology Award

It started with a range of all-natural, pre-cooked, pulled wood-smoked meat and vegan products: truly unique products with nothing like them on the Australian market. And it grew from there...

Founded in May, 2021 by local Food Technologists Jeff Schultheiss and his wife Karen, Darling Fresh Smoke Haus has doubled production in the past year and is following up with a range of wood-smoked seasonings and some spectacular sauces.

DF Smoke Haus was recognised for its success at the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards as a finalist in three categories and winner of the Innovation Category.

“For us the win is recognition of firstly a good idea, but then more importantly the hard work and quality in execution since our start one and a half years ago,” said Jeff.

DF Smoke Haus products are unique as they are 100% natural, with no preservatives or E-numbers. There are no other all-natural pre-cooked/pulled/sliced wood-smoked meat products

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available, nor any wood-smoked vegan foods on the market.

“We released the Wood-Smoked Seasonings range in June, which are proving extremely popular. Then we added a new Pulled Lamb in September, which sold out the first weekend and is continuing to sell well,” said Jeff.

“Now we are preparing for the imminent release of a three delicious Smoke-Roasted Sauces: tomato, barbecue and a totally delicious hot sauce.”

Growth in 2022 has also allowed DF Smoke Haus to expand its team, hiring locally and allowing Jeff and Karen to work in the business full-time.

DF Smoke Haus products are available in selected Brisbane and Toowoomba retailers and online for delivery throughout Australia. www.dfsmokehaus.com.au



2022 Finalists

★ Darling Fresh Smoke Haus

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MAKE GREAT HAPPEN



2022 Winner



Professional Services Award

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Words by Natalie Fogarty, owner

“Business is about the heart, if it's focus is about brains or money, your business will never succeed.” Natalie Fogarty

Tell us a bit about your business and why it is excellent.

Vigour Graphics was founded 17 years ago in Goondiwindi Queensland. It quickly grew from graphic design, printing and photography to including web design and maintenance. Our passion is creativity and connection. We are cheerleaders for our clients and have a love for rural and regional businesses. Our expertise and commitment to our clients' success is what excites us and makes us happy to come to work everyday. “When you love what you do, it'll never feel like work.”

Why did you enter the awards this year?

The BEA enables you really take a good hard look at your business, it's weaknesses and strengths. Even if you do not win, it's a winning exercise all round for reviewing and strengthening

your business practices and values. I believe that the recognition, either as a finalist or winner, adds extra credibility and visibility to your business and opens up new opportunities. On a personal level it's a celebration of all our hard work and achievements that we're extremely proud of.

How was the application process helpful to your business?

The application is lengthy and detailed - but in a good way. I believe it allows you to go deep into your business structure, the processes and systems, helping you to gain valuable insight into your strengths and weaknesses.

What does the win mean for your staff and customers?

Our studio is still buzzing with high energy since winning and we're enjoying the accolades from our friends, clients and peers. We are holding a business retreat, a client visiting road trip out west, a new accountability group to support our business friends, and events to give back to our community.

What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about entering next year?

Don't think just do. Create a space of no distractions where you can get into the flow of answering the questions from your most authentic self and deliver honest insights into your business. Do not pay someone to complete the application. Do it yourself. Be excited about the questions, because at the end of the day you should be excited about your business and proud of what you are doing and accomplishing. Whether you become a finalist or not you will gain so much from just applying.

Any future plans?

In 2023 we are going to focus on more streamlined processes for communication with our clients and more training to up-level our services. We will continue connect with the bush through sponsorships and creating events for rural people.



2022 Finalists

CDI Pest Management
 Clifford Gouldson Lawyers
 Foodie Shots
 McAdam & Turnbull Realty
 ★ Vigour Graphics



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- Loan Brokerage

2022 Winner



Retail Award

Proudly sponsored by:



Meeting the high standards of consumers in the luxury goods market requires more than excellence in customer service, product range and overall shopping experience. It requires passion for every aspect of that business. Hogan's Family Jewellers delivers that in spades!

Lachy Hogan, Managing Director of Hogan's Family Jewellers, is rightly proud of the new and holistic experience delivered at Hogan's.

"We've just opened our new showroom and workshop in Margaret

Street. It's a bright, contemporary space showcasing our own creations and designer collections. Our workroom is state-of-the-art and enables customers to see behind-the-scenes and what goes into crafting a unique piece of jewellery."

But there's still more to this business. Outside of designing and manufacturing jewellery, The Hogan's are able to carry out valuations, source gemstones, thread pearls and remodel or repair existing pieces.

Over the years, Hogan's has had the privilege of crafting many bespoke pieces, and this year something really special came along.

"In 2022 we assisted with the production of Toowoomba's King of the Mountain trophy - a first for our workshop!" said Lachy. "As one

of only a handful of trophies in the country to include a diamond set, 18k yellow gold embellishment, this was a unique job we couldn't turn down."

None of our achievements would be possible without a dedicated team and Hogan's foster a workplace culture that supports career paths and long-tenured employment. There are ten qualified jewellers, two diamond setters, three jewellery apprentices, seven highly knowledgeable sales consultants and now, they're very own in-house marketing resource.

It's easy to see why Hogan's Family Jewellers has won many awards including the BEA Retail Category two years in a row, and they were also inducted into the Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame.



2022 Finalists

Excavation Equipment

Hammy's Cupcakes

★ Hogan's Family Jewellers

Ryley Jewellery Creations



*Celebrating 10 years
in 2022!*



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2022 Winner



Tourism Award

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Words by Jenny O'Reilly, Franchisee/ General Manager Quest Toowoomba

Tell us a bit about your business and why it is excellent.

We pride ourselves on delivering an exceptional experience to our guests. We do this by creating a culture within our business that is both professional and personable within our team, and by engaging in the local community.

Why did you enter the awards this year?

Recognition is always a great feeling, and we wanted to share that with our team to show them that we are all part of something bigger than just our four walls. It was also a good opportunity for external feedback on areas of improvement, with good networking opportunities with other local businesses and influencers.

Was the application process helpful to your business?

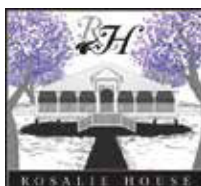
While lengthy, it was very thorough, and was a great opportunity to review our business – there is always something to be improved on

What does the win mean for your staff and customers?

We took a lot of our employees along to the awards night. It was a great celebration for the team to enjoy together. It was lovely to see how proud everyone was of our win

What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about entering next year?

Take the time to really understand the criteria and plan out your application accordingly. Keep documentation on how you have engaged with the local community throughout the year so you can actively demonstrate this to the judges and in your application.



The Vino Valet

2022 Finalists

Crows Nest Tourist Park

★ Quest Toowoomba

Rosalie House Cellar Door Restaurant

The Vino Valet

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2022 Winner

STIRLING
& TRUFFLES
GREEN SINCE 2020



Sole Trader of the Year

**Words by Petria Cumner,
Head Honcho**

*Tell us a bit about your
business.*

At Stirling & Truffles, our mission is to reduce single use plastic by providing a solution everyone can incorporate as a way of life. We inspire lifestyle through hand-crafted sustainable and ethically sourced leather products. Our beautiful artisan products help you embrace eco-friendly living. Each bespoke handcrafted item is made to last, unique and tells its own story. We aim to put the fun in functional fashion and lifestyle pieces!

*Why did you enter the
awards this year?*

We were delighted to be nominated and it was a no brainer for us to enter. We have been researching and developing products as well as registering design patents since 2020 however, we only launched as a business July 1st this year to coincide with Plastic Free July. The products were welcomed in the major cities and coastal areas across Queensland, Sydney and Melbourne early on however it wasn't as fast

locally. We felt that entering the BEA would give us the local exposure and connections that we needed.

*What do you think of the
application process?*

The application process is very in depth and thorough. Covering all things business - strategic business planning, financials, social responsibilities and sustainability factors - all the things we need to be investing time in to make sure we stay on track and don't get lost in the daily grind. This is important for any business but especially as a Sole Trader when it is only you.

*What does the win
mean for your staff and
customers?*

We are still pinching ourselves! Starting anything new is a risk. Will people believe the product is as amazing as we do? The investment not just financially but also the long 15+hour days with a start-up and juggling a family. To be recognised and awarded by the Toowoomba Chamber is priceless. Within 24 hours of receiving our award we already had more orders come in

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locally! The win shows us that we are on the right path and that our hard work to create a better future for our little guy, and all other mini-humans we are leaving the planet to.

*What advice would you
give to someone who is
thinking about entering
next year?*

DO IT! It's no walk in the park to enter so be prepared to put your business under the microscope but the journey and rewards are well worth it!

As for the future?

Over the next 12 months we will be furthering our relationship with a sustainable bamboo bike company producing bespoke, plastic free bags and accessories that we hope will expand globally. We also plan to further our relationships with cellar doors around the country to stock our wine bottle carriers and of course continue our mission to increase awareness of the importance of limiting plastic water bottles and single use plastics.



2022
Finalists

Foodie Shots

Petria Liana Interior Design

Saama Links

★ Stirling & Truffles

Queensland Training AWARDS

There's no higher honour for excellence in an apprenticeship than being nominated in the Queensland Training Awards.

Harvey Phillips, 2021 Apprentice of the Year – Tropical North Queensland winner and Queensland finalist

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Individual awards

- Harry Hauenschild Apprentice of the Year
- Bob Marshman Trainee of the Year
- Vocational Student of the Year
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year
- School-based Apprentice or Trainee of the Year
- Equity VET Student of the Year
- VET Teacher or Trainer of the Year

Business and community awards

- Community Training Initiative of the Year
- Large Employer of the Year
- Medium Employer of the Year
- Small Employer of the Year
- Premier's Industry Collaboration Award

Training provider awards

- Large Training Provider of the Year
- Small Training Provider of the Year

Additional categories are available at the national level, as part of the Australian Training Awards.

Sponsorship opportunities available.

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2022 Winner



Micro Business of the Year

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Queensland Government

Words by Annie White

Tell us a bit about your business and why it is excellent.

We do what we love at ParisiAnn! Every piece of food, cake or pastry that leaves the kitchen is something we would eat. This philosophy is at the heart of our business, it's what makes us passionate about what we do and keeps our customers coming back for more.

Why did you enter the awards this year?

After several years of nominations, we felt that our business had grown in such a positive way that now was the time for us to accept the nomination.

How was the application process helpful to your business?

We found the application process to be really involved, however it

did provide us the opportunity to be reflective in our processes and highlighted some gaps. From an HR perspective, it has made us sit back and look at our processes to improve and strengthen these areas.

What does the win mean for your staff and customers?

It is definitely that affirmation of success for us. For our staff it has allowed them to enjoy this success as we are a whole team. Our customers really had ownership of this award too, we felt it gave them a sense of pride, they felt like they had won it too. We are still enjoying the ride and the boost to our profile.

What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about entering next year?

Be authentic, know your product and know your processes.



2022 Finalists

- ASKAFOODTECH
- Darling Fresh Smoke Haus
- Kasper Inspections
- ★ ParisiAnn Patisserie
- Stephen Henry Optometry
- Vigour Graphics





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2022 Winner



People's Choice Award

Words by Matthew Dolley

Tell us about your business?

The Grove Country Gardens is an online retail nursery specializing in hard-to-find perennials and plants that are not grown by big growers or stocked by big box stores thereby giving our customers something truly unique and different.

Why did you enter the awards this year?

I was nominated and felt that I should at least apply – “What’s the harm”, I thought! The application process was good in that it forced me to sit

back and take a birds-eye view of the business to see just how far I have come and where I am heading.

What does the win mean for your staff and customers?

Winning the people's choice meant so much, especially to my customers. They are the ones that turned out and voted for me and that makes me so proud. Proud that I have created enough rapport with my customers that they would want to take the time out of their day to support me!

What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about entering next year?

Honestly, you have nothing to lose and if you are truly yourself and put yourself out there you just never know what’s possible.

As for the future, Matt just wants to keep on growing great plants and getting them out to gardeners across the country!

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The Chronicle



2022 Finalists

Breakaway Toowoomba

Clifford Gouldson Lawyers

Foodie Shots

★ The Grove Country Gardens

Hammy's Cupcakes

Harness Energy

Joe Wagner Group

McAdam & Turnbull Realty

ParisiAnn Patisserie

Semloh Support Services

XFactor Plumbing





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2022 Winner



Agriculture Award

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Clayton's Organic beef is an independent family run farm committed to delivering great tasting beef, whilst providing high standards of animal welfare and preserving the environment for generations to come. In 1995, the family became one of the first to achieve Certified Organic status and since then they have never looked back. With the family farm located just north of Toowoomba, owners Clayton & Jackie Sargood are proud to call the Darling Downs home.

consistently superior beef, using traditional and modern methods. We don't compromise on quality – and that goes throughout all aspects of our business. We care about everyone who works with us, the quality of crops that we grow and how we take care of our land. Clayton's is a family business through and through.

our Gourmet Beef Jerky range made from our own Certified Organic Beef. This product is now available to purchase via our website www.claytonorganicbeef.com.au.

We look forward to new beginnings in 2023 as we expand to also provide Certified Organic Pork. This along with our great tasting beef, selling both in Australia and across the globe in 2023 will certainly continue to put our great region on the map.

We are passionate about farming, taking care of our animals and producing exceptional organic beef products. Our goal is to provide

The team at Clayton's Organics were thrilled to be nominated in the Agriculture division of the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2022 and elated to come home with a win.

This excitement has continued for us this year with the availability of



2022 Finalists

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2022 Winner



CEO Special Recognition Award

Words by Tiffany Ernst

In terms of excellence, our business name says it all! X Factor Plumbing stands on the principles of honesty, responsiveness and quality delivery of service. Our prompt attention to emergencies, unusual requests and regular, routine maintenance gives us that Extra Factor.

We entered the Awards this year to recognise the quality skills and loyalty of our wonderful team. We have had a rocky journey as a small business and as a family, so we are immensely proud of our stickability and of how far we have come.

The application process was helpful in making us take stock of just how much we have achieved and reflecting on our learnings along the way so far. It really showed us we are definitely on the right track.

This win highlights the loyalty of our often, hot, tired and frustrated staff who are highly skilled and always pleasant and respectful. It reflects the confidence and satisfaction our customers have in our work. By sharing this win on our social media

and website, we want to acknowledge how much this means to us.

We are inspired! The win gives us the big boost in energy we needed to continue building on our strengths and growing in new directions. This recognition has given us the confidence to know we are built of strong stuff and that we can expand on our foundations.

Advice to someone thinking of entering next year?

Just go for it! You have nothing to lose and so much to gain.





BRINGING AI TO LIFE .. *Make it so*

In 2020, we first met Oscar's cousin, AI - the strong, shiny, human holding Focus HR's disk on the Business Excellence Awards trophy. This year we got to know him a bit better. His acrobatic skills and goofy humour came to life in a series of cartoons created by local animator John Rowe.

Yes, it's the same John Rowe who accepted the 2021 Hall of Fame induction for Rowes Furniture. And yes, there sure is a story here and it involves following your dreams ... John's, not AI's.

John has been working as a professional animator since 1989. His creations cover a broad range of topics for clients all over the world. Some of his creations can be found with organisations such as CSIRO, National Geographic, Nobel Prize Foundation, BBC and even the Smithsonian Institute.

But John wasn't always an animator, in fact that job description barely existed when he left school. So how did he transition from accountant to award-winning animator?

John grew up in Toowoomba with science fiction in his veins.

He especially enjoyed shows like Star Trek which led him to dream of being an Astro physicist or a mathematician when he finished school. But, he settled for ten years as an accountant in the family business, Rowe's Furniture in Russell Street.

Luckily John's science mind never stopped and his interest in computers led him to buy a Commodore Amiga which revolutionised PC animation software.

"There were no courses in animation back then, so I taught myself," he said. "Then an opportunity arose to accept a full-time job in Brisbane with a production company that was making a series of instructional videos for TAFE. I moved the family to Brisbane and we lived there for seven years."

John said although it was a bit of a risk, it well and truly paid

off. The opportunity to learn 3D animation on cutting-edge equipment set him up for life.

"For me the best part about animation is that it's an empowering tool that allows me to bring to life something which until that point has only existed in my head. It's very dependent on the tools (software) and over the 30+ years that I've been doing animation the tools have become much more powerful and efficient. Much that was impossible is now possible. I could never create character animation - until around 10 years ago that required Disney-like talent but in the last five years new empowering tools have come along that allow me to animate characters which is quite unexpected and wonderful. There's real joy for me in doing that."

John built his own clientele and created animations for tourist

attractions including the Min Min Centre in Boulia, fishing in Wivenhoe Dam, Mt Coot-tha Planetarium and the Cosmos Centre in Charleville. He also worked with the CSIRO creating animated vision to accompany media releases about discoveries in astronomy and science.

John maintains that Star Trek helped in creating a Hollywood feel to his animations.

“I can imagine the camera angles and fly-throughs based on watching hours of Star Trek,” he said.

“Sometimes, what you think would be the simplest things - a child skipping, a person sweeping, a person trying to balance while walking depends on a lot of problem solving and finding ways around limitations and issues.”

John currently works from his “digi-dungeon” in Toowoomba. Some of his favourite projects are the much-loved light shows projected on the big screen that is the façade of Rowes Furniture store.

“The Light Shows have been something very special in my career. I try and explain to people, including my wife Sandie, what’s in my head but they often don’t get it until they see the finished version and I guess that’s art really, although I’ve never really seen myself as an artist.

“In its purest form, animation is a tool where something beautiful and joyful can be visualised, brought to life and shared from one mind to another in a way that brings wonder. I see that on people’s faces as they watch the Rowes Light Shows and to me getting to see that and witnessing their joy is the greatest gift.”

In 2011 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Parkes Radio Telescope, the CSIRO conducted a survey of their scientists asking them to suggest the picture which best represented 50 years of Australian Radio Astronomy Science. They picked my Double Pulsar picture and it was printed on a huge banner at Parkes for the celebrations on the day!



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Launch of FOCUS HR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2022

Wednesday 13 July 2022

Sponsored by Rowes Furniture

ROWES

Time to shine a
spotlight on You

Attended by past winners and this year's event partners, the launch of the Focus HR Business Awards thrilled guests with its circus theme complete with stilt-walkers and acrobats. With thanks to Ruth Atkinson from Curious Arts and Visual Focus, dancers from Dance Central and catering by The Catering People. Photos by Matt Ryan from SALT Studios.





Finalists' Function

Thursday 27 October, 2022
Sponsored by Regional
Development Australia



Under the twinkly fairy lights and Jacaranda trees at Gip's Restaurant, Toowoomba Chamber celebrated with the finalists of the 2022 Focus HR Business Excellence Awards. Attended by Chamber staff, board members, finalists and BEA partners for 2022 this is one of our favourite events of the year. It is a truly joyous occasion.

With thanks to Recognition Plus for the trophies.
Photos by Matt Ryan from SALT Studios.





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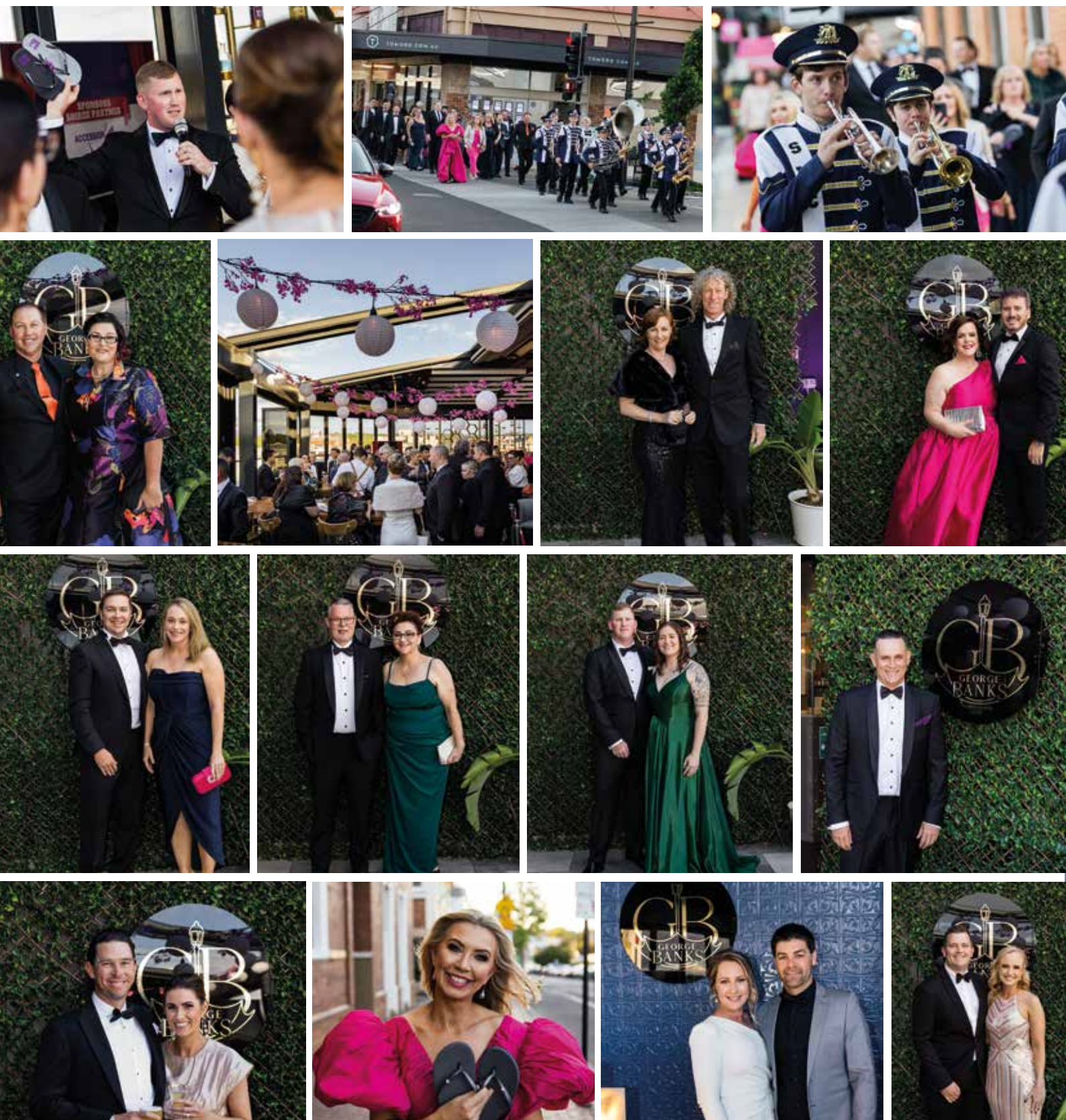
Sponsors' Soiree

Saturday 5th November 2022
at George Banks - sponsored by
Accession3



Each year Toowoomba Chamber likes to give a special thanks to its BEA partners – without whom the awards night would not happen. This year we held our thank you for partners at the very stylish George Banks Rooftop Restaurant.

With thanks to Benn Tracey from St Mary's College Brass Band. Photos by Andrew Coates from SALT Studios.



Red Carpet Aperitivo

at Rumours - sponsored by
Demi International



You wanted wow factor on arrival? We gave it to you! Guests walked the red carpet into Rumours International amidst circus performers and amusement park rides. With champagne in hand and mingling all around the excitement and anticipation was building before the doors opened to the main event.



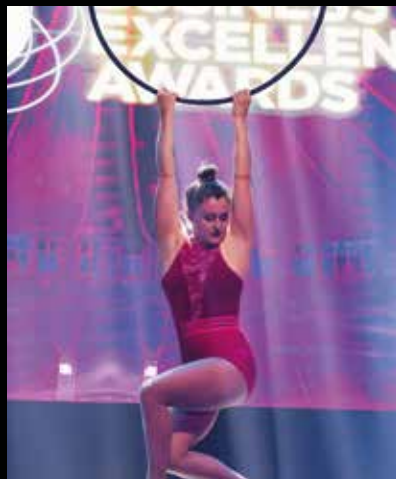


EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Saturday 5 November 2022
held at Rumours International

Attended by around 600 people, the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards shone the spotlight on local business. With its circus theme, this black-tie extravaganza reached a new level of excellence itself. With thanks to the talented Jo Capp for pulling it altogether; Toowoomba Chamber staff for their unfailing good humour, calm and teamwork this event has clearly surpassed all others.

With thanks to: Penny Hely for catering, Trophies by Cobb+Co Museum, Circus performers, Cassus coordinated by Ruth Atkinson of Visual Focus, Acknowledgement of Country by Shannon Bauwens, The St Mary's Choir – 'The Vernados' sang – Never Enough, Music by Second Hand Souls – led by Carmen Traise, Photography by SALT Studios and Videography by Foxtail Productions. Of course, extra special thanks to Jim, Cathy and the team at Rumours International.







WISHING YOU A PROSPEROUS 2023

Thank you for coming with us on the journey that was 2022.

It was such a privilege to share local business stories through our digital networks. Our digital outreach, climbed to a stunning record high, interacting with 944,360 people, whilst we took our first tentative steps into the world of Tik Tok, which sits in the top 5 learning platforms in our country.

We continued to stand up for local business, by shining a spotlight on the skills shortfall and housing crisis that continues to impact all Toowoomba businesses.

We started to build the business case for future advocacy with the Toowoomba Business Performance Sentiment Index delivered by McCrindle, a world leader in tracking emerging demographic issues and through our Annual Business Survey, produced by international researcher Blair Sullivan of Create Consult Research. Critical as we head towards State and local government elections in 2024.

We hosted a number of valuable learning events such as the Leading Women Series, Men's Mental Health and the Federal Budget Breakfast with RSM.

Our monthly networking event Business@Dusk continued to increase in popularity, whilst and the crowning jewel of the Toowoomba Business community, The Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2022 was by all accounts, the best one yet!

We continued the work with our valued volunteers who form the Future Leaders Advisory Group, CBD Revitalisation Advisory Committee, Food and Ag Network and continued to build the Business Connect Program, Dine Darling Downs platform and Toowoomba Conferences. We thank you.

With the year now nearly behind us, the Board of the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce would like to wish our valued partners and members, the broader business community and Toowoomba residents a happy holidays, seasons greetings and a prosperous new year.

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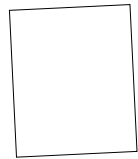
Take a breath



Congratulations! It's time to stop, relax and unwind – you've earned it!

And while you're taking a breath it's the perfect time to dive into some strategic thinking about 2023.

- 1. Sit and think.** Imagine yourself at this time next year, reading a postcard you've written to yourself. What will your business look like in 12 months? What will you be most proud of?
- 2. Get writing.** You've got five minutes to grab some paper and write! Then take some time to list the things that need to happen in your business in order for that postcard to be a true picture. That's what we call **Destination Postcard!**
- 3. Grab our free tools.** Strategic planning is a process and a system. It's not magic or mystery. We've helped hundreds of SMEs with their strategy, we know our process and system works. Scan the QR code and take a look at the free tools on our website.



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We'd love to help you reach your destination.

*Naomi, Alistair and
the Focus HR team*