



Memo to: Mayor Watton

Copy to: All Councillors, General Manager, Directors, Senior Leadership Group and Communications & Engagement Team

From: Sue Page, Acting Director Planning and Environment

Subject: Economic Development Grants and Sponsorship Program

Date: 28 January 2026

Reference: CRM 1850/2026 – DOC2026/015035

Dear Councillor Watton

I refer to your email dated 25 January 2026 regarding the following:

“Is council committed to being a diamond sponsor for the 31st Hunter Region business awards? If so, how much was / is this particular sponsorship?”

What else is council currently sponsoring?”

Council officers have investigated the subject matter and advise as follows:

31st Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards

Council is not a *Diamond Sponsor* in the sense of a commercial or corporate sponsorship package. Council's support for the 31st Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards was provided through the Economic Development Grants and Sponsorships program, in line with Council's adopted Operational Plan.

Under the Operational Plan action to “provide economic development grants to support business chambers and tourist associations”, funding is offered by invitation only to Council's eight recognised economic development partners.

In the current funding round, Council received three applications and approved a total of \$15,000 in funding, allocated to:

1. Hunter Region Business Enterprise Centre Incorporated – 31st Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards - \$5,000 (Sponsorship)
2. Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association – Hunter Bicentenary concept plan - \$5,000 (Project)
3. Wollombi Chamber of Commerce – Stubbornly Timeless Wollombi campaign - \$5,000 (Project)

The funding provided to the Hunter Region Business Enterprise Centre supports delivery of the awards as a regional economic development initiative, rather than a tiered sponsorship arrangement.

Other Economic Development and Tourism related Sponsorships

In addition to the above, Council has a number of active sponsorship agreements supported under the Visitor Economy program, which are aligned to tourism, events and destination development objectives.

Council also has other sponsorship arrangements that were approved prior to the commencement of the current Manager, which continue to operate in accordance with their original terms and Council resolutions.

A consolidated register or summary of current sponsorship agreements (including Visitor Economy and legacy arrangements), together with current enquiries, is tabled below.

Applicant	For sponsorship of:	Amount:	Approved	Event date
Australian Society of Anaesthetists	Specialist conference for 400 pax	\$5,000	Nov 2024 (legacy)	7-11 Oct 2026
Heavy Vehicle Industry Organisation	Business event	\$5,000	Mar 2025 (legacy)	17-19 May 2026
MX-5 Car Club	Business event	\$5,000	Dec 2025 (visitor economy)	3-8 May 2026
The Business Hub	Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards	\$5,000	Dec 2025	29 May 2026
Enquiries				
Motorcycling NSW	NSW Motocross State Titles	\$5,000	PROPOSED	27-28 June 2026
Confederation of Australian Sport	2027 Australian Masters Games	TBC	PROPOSED	TBC 2027

Summary

- Council's support for the Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards is via the Economic Development Grants and Sponsorships program, not a commercial Diamond Sponsorship.
- \$15,000 was approved across three organisations under this program in the current round.
- Council also maintains sponsorship agreements under the Visitor Economy program, as well as legacy sponsorships approved prior to the current Manager's commencement.

Please note, a copy of this memo will be uploaded to the Council website.