



The Melt: Creating Hard Things and Forging Future Opportunities

A wealth of exciting new businesses, technologies and industries of the future are being created in the Hunter, and many have their origins in The Melt – a remarkable early-stage startup investor, accelerator and incubator creating a pipeline of clean-energy innovation.

“Our model is unique,” says Brett Thomas, Partner and COO. “We invest in startups and offer them all the support they need to build their physical products in our prototyping hubs and then get their products to market. We have financially backed and accelerated some of the region’s most exciting innovators and new businesses.”

Those businesses include Allegro Energy, which creates water-based, fully recyclable, long duration renewable energy storage batteries; MGA Thermal, pioneering large-scale clean steam, power and energy storage in thermal blocks; and Refilled, whose smart drink dispenser can pour over 100 combinations of drinks on demand without producing single-use plastic waste.

Melt Ventures early-stage venture capital funds provide start-ups with up to \$1.5m of investment – but The Melt is much more than an investor. It also creates, builds, scales and connects innovators of hardware and clean tech, enabling new technologies to be piloted in real-world environments, helping to identify barriers to commercial success, and connecting startups with further investment and finance opportunities.

The operation has at its heart a Modern Manufacturing Centre where startups, scaleups and existing businesses can build a prototype alongside industry experts using world-class equipment. With strong links to clean energy precincts such as AGL’s Hunter Energy Hub, The Melt is well positioned to understand the emerging needs of industry – then invest in and grow the tech that meets those needs.

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The Melt’s latest facility opened in 2023 in the Hunter Innovation Precinct at Muswellbrook. A \$1.79 million grant from the NSW Government is assisting The Melt host acceleration and commercialisation programs over a 4-year period. The Melt’s other partners include Trent Bagnall and Clint Bruin, successful Australian businessmen who have managed more than 100 startup investments. Their vision: to turn inspirational ideas into successful companies while helping to transform the Hunter into a clean-energy super precinct, securing local jobs and supporting industry to work towards net zero.

It’s estimated that the development of a new regional economy, based on renewable energy and other industries, could lead to the creation of up to 10,000 new jobs in the region by 2030*.

Thomas says the Hunter is the perfect place for The Melt. “Most of Australia’s key and largest energy coal mines and power generators are here. As they diminish over time, we need to find ways to re-employ or re-skill those people to keep them here,” he says. “The vision for this region is for it to remain the energy heartland of NSW. In order to do that, we’re creating the next generation of start-ups and scaleups.”

*KPMG, *Economic Briefing – August | Economic Transition Forces in the Hunter*, City of Newcastle, 2023, accessed 11 September 2024.



Australian Government



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