



Level 7
77 Market Street
Wollongong NSW 2500

PO Box 866
Wollongong NSW 2500
Australia

ABN: 51 194 660 183
Telephone: +61 2 4229 2633
Facsimile: +61 2 4226 2273
www.kpmg.com.au

Mr V May
Interim Administrator
Wingecarribee Shire Council
68 Elizabeth Street
Moss Vale NSW 2577

13 July 2021

Dear Viv

Report on the Economic Development Roundtable held on 25 June 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to assist Wingecarribee Shire Council by facilitating an Economic Development Roundtable on Friday 25th June 2021.

The roundtable was attended by 16 people comprising representatives of various bodies with an interest in the economic development of the region, as well as a cross section of interested individuals.

Pleasingly, the participants in the roundtable approached the session with a positive, forward looking attitude and were focused on the future with a positive mindset towards economic development.

The day commenced with a presentation by the General Manager of Tamworth Regional Council, Mr Paul Bennett, followed by a question and answer session. Paul described the development and implementation of the Tamworth Regional Blueprint 100.

Following this presentation, each participant had the opportunity to introduce themselves and their organisation, and to provide their perspective on Council's Southern Highlands Destination Strategy 2020-2030. We also discussed some of the strengths and opportunities of the region and ideas on the next stages of revising/updating Council's Economic Development framework.



Key themes

The key themes shared by the participants included the following perceived weaknesses in the current economic development approach of Council:

- A high level of dissatisfaction with the Destination Strategy, its factual accuracy and its lack of interaction with other policies/strategies and its lack of defined actions;
- A view that council, through its published strategies, the actions and interpretations of its officers and its culture is anti-development;
- A significant issue for the region is housing affordability and diversity, and this is impacting on the availability of appropriate staff in many sectors, particularly tourism and hospitality;
- Similarly transport infrastructure, both connecting and bypassing townships and communities, is lacking or poorly maintained; and
- The Tourism strategy should be separate from, or a subset of, a broad-based Economic Development Strategy.

During the discussions the participants were also positive about the future of the region and saw many opportunities including:

- Developing a clear brand for the region that provides an identity for the visitor economy and potentially for the region's products;
- Developing a 7 day a week, year-round visitor economy;
- Capitalising on the existing comparative advantages of the region, for example utilising its agricultural richness and sustainable practices to provide high quality produce to the large nearby markets of Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong;
- Planning development areas that maintain the rural character of the shire with its separate localities whilst also providing integrated and affordable housing with strong transport linkages (including potential for eco-villages); and
- Developing integrated higher education opportunities focused on agriculture, horticulture and viticulture (University and TAFE).



Next steps

In order to build on the current goodwill within the community and the appetite for change I recommend that council:

- Develop an agreed long term vision for the region, incorporating what the community will look like and how economic development will assist in achieving this vision, including how it relates to population growth, land use planning and zoning etc;
- Create a comprehensive Economic Development Plan that evolves from, and expands on, the current Destination Strategy, is based on data and evidence, and that considers key enabling factors such as transport connectivity and diversity in housing supply;
- Work more collaboratively with businesses and business associations and representative groups, which could include establishing mechanisms for harnessing the collective experience of people in the region to support businesses and younger people; and
- Better support the Development Application process by ensuring that Council's policies and their interpretation/application align with Council's strategic goals, and also by improving its customer service approach. This could include developing a clearer, more streamlined approach for development applications that relate to holding events.

I look forward to seeing Council's progress in these areas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Warwick Shanks'.

Warwick Shanks
Partner