



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH REPORT

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE PROJECT

The Greater Hume Shire Economic profiling project was commissioned to explore the economic and social makeup of the Shire and five Townships within it. The townships involved are Culcairn, Henty, Jindera, Holbrook and Walla Walla.

The project looked to understand the economic profile of each town and the individual impact key businesses had on their economy.

It also looked to identify the competitive advantages that, if leveraged and focused, could be utilised to drive not only sustainability but prosperity. Once understood, key competitive advantages could be harnessed to drive whole of Shire outcomes.

In undertaking the project we used a number of consultative techniques to draw out information and structure a compelling rationale for recommendations and focus areas.

The project took a triple bottom line approach with both economic and social drivers explored.

Each township through their Council representative, nominated key individuals and businesses to take part in the project. Despite this element of being hand selected there was varying degrees of engagement with the project from different towns.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT - SUMMARY FINDINGS



THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted included desk top research, a whole of Shire business climate survey, an individual township business climate survey and one on one telephone interviews.

The whole of Shire workshop explored the past, present and future with participants called upon to identify actions that would drive sustainability. Upon identifying a number of opportunities, participants then had the opportunity to triage the list and identify those activities which they believed would have the greatest impact.

A key challenge, as well as an opportunity, for the Shire is that each township is unique with different competitive advantages. Interestingly however, the challenges faced by each are relatively similar.

In exploring the past, the group identified a number of community and infrastructure projects that continue to support the Shire today. Investment in sporting facilities, the Henty Farm and Machinery Field Days (HFMD) and economic infrastructure to support agri-business were identified as key investments made, which the community continues to benefit from today.

In exploring the present the group identified quality of life, proximity to a major regional centre and housing affordability as strong competitive advantages from which to grow.

In looking to the opportunities in the future the group identified a number of opportunities that could drive economic outcomes. In order of preference opportunities identified included:

- A canola crushing plant.
- Attraction of new business to the Shire.
- Leverage the access and proximity to the major regional centre of Albury Wodonga.
- Service the truck industry.
- Develop a bulk haulage rail opportunity.
- Build on recreational pursuits.

The workshop moved to individual town break out groups where each town worked through a structured survey that looked to gain insights around:

1. Economic opportunities.
2. Education and training.
3. Innovation and creativity.
4. Leadership and collaboration.
5. Communications.
6. Business support services.
7. Relationship with local council.
8. Finance.
9. Marketing and awareness.
10. Human resources.

The next phase of the project saw Crowe Horwath conduct one on one interviews to explore individual views and inform the economic impact element of the project.

THE FINDINGS

Having undertaken such a comprehensive engagement process we would be of the view that participants were much more comfortable and informed when discussing situations in their own town. Identifying Shire wide competitive advantages and opportunities was more challenging.

Whilst there are some linkages between towns and the feedback around Greater Hume Shire initiatives was generally positive, it is clear that linkages are minimal and allegiances very much town centric.

Each individual town had its own unique competitive advantage but each faced similar challenges. Key challenges identified were:

- Young people exiting the district.
- A lack of workforce capacity and skills.
- A lack of business infrastructure such as mobile and high speed broadband.
- An ageing population.
- Town planning and development.

From a business perspective, with a few isolated businesses aside, we would be of the view that there is little consideration, at either a town or individual business level, given around utilising strategic partnerships throughout the Shire and potentially clustering to provide a more holistic service or offering. Most took an isolated view of their business world and scanned the environment as it appeared in their town.

The workshops uncovered a broad range of ideas and commentary. Ideas were both short and long term and have been captured in this report. Most ideas revolved around the town from which they came, although most would have a broad benefit to the Shire as a whole. In exploring ideas we have clustered them around eight key focus areas being:

1. Attract young families.
2. Create effective business infrastructure.
3. Create a tourist destination.
4. Develop a unique brand and message.
5. Cater for an ageing population.
6. Truck and transport friendly towns.
7. Attract new business.
8. Develop strategic partnerships.

Each of these strategic focus areas are able to be practically applied with focused intent. They can be resourced utilising existing resources and building on private government partnerships. The recommendations align with the regions competitive advantages and play to the strengths of individual towns.

Key individual businesses have significant economic impact in the towns of the Greater Hume Shire. Whilst this maybe viewed as a risk it is also an opportunity. An opportunity that if the business infrastructure is in place, the triple bottom line competitive advantages afforded the Shire can be leveraged to attract more business.

Having said that, economic forces do not work in isolation. Currently agri-business would still be viewed as the key economic driver of the region, however we are seeing a shift to a more mobile, lifestyle driven resident who is happy to commute to a major regional centre.

Interestingly the role of the large consolidating agri-businesses and the impact of seasonal fluctuations on the local economies was not necessarily discussed through the various engagement opportunities. This may be a result of taking the impact of large agri-business somewhat for granted.

It may also be that the focus of this project has been the towns, however we would have thought most businesses would be impacted heavily by agri-business even if not serving them directly.

The close proximity of significant regional centres means that the ability to live in a safe community, with affordable housing and adequate education resources, could be compelling enough to attract young families. Young families bring a vitality and economic prosperity to a community and in harnessing this, much can be achieved.

The region has distinct strengths that, with a focused approach, could offer significant opportunities for the Greater Hume Shire and its current and future residents. These focused activities include:

- A consolidated approach to increase tourist visitation.
- A compelling way to tell the story of the region.
- A range of services aimed at leveraging competitive advantage in aged care, as well as transport and logistics.

Much of this will depend on the ability of the towns of the Shire to think more broadly and work in collaborative partnerships to achieve tangible outcomes.



2 BACKGROUND



GREATER HUME SHIRE ECONOMIC RESEARCH PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The GHS Economic Research project methodology has been designed to explore triple bottom line economic indicators, including social and community impacts, in determining the strengths and challenges facing the Shire.

The project was designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative information to inform the project. There were four key methodologies utilised they were:

1. Desktop research.
2. Whole of Shire workshop discussion.
3. Individual township Business Climate Survey Workshop.
4. Individual one on one interview with key business leaders.

The original workshop scheduled for October was postponed until February to enable higher levels of participation from the agricultural community.

The aims of the methodology were to:

- Create an economic profile of each township.
- Understand the competitive advantages of each township, which could be leveraged both locally and across the GHS.
- Understand the opportunities that could potentially lead to an increase in community capacity.
- Determine the resources required to seize these opportunities.
- Document the unique factors which do, and will, make the GHS a great place to live and work.
- Understand the constraints, limiting factors and risks of doing business across GHS.

3 BUSINESS CLIMATE SURVEY

In designing the whole of Shire Community Assessment Workshop we looked at exploring the past, recognising the present and envisaging the future.

Participants were asked to identify key decisions made in the past that had significant contribution to current business outcomes.

The workshop then held a facilitated discussion around the current situation with both strengths and challenges explored and documented.

Finally participants were asked to explore the creation of a new future and what some of the opportunities may look like. Once documented, participants voted on the ideas which most resonated with them.

The second stage of the workshop saw participants break out into town groups. They worked their way through a business Climate survey which explored ten key themes being:

1. Economic Opportunities.
2. Education and Training.
3. Innovation and Creativity.
4. Leadership and Collaboration
5. Communications.
6. Business Support Services.
7. Relationship with Local Council.
8. Finance.
9. Marketing and Awareness.
10. Human Resources.

The answers were recorded in an electronic survey and analysed to inform this report.

The final stage of gathering data saw individuals contacted by telephone and worked through a series of structured questions to drill down on an individual view.

The whole of Shire, township and individual surveys were designed to understand the current triple bottom line situation across the Shire at different levels.

In doing this we looked to understand the competitive advantages GHS holds and to leverage these to create ideas to recommend future priorities and opportunities.



Building community capacity is inherently linked to a community's ability to act collectively to take advantage of opportunities.

A two part community workshop was conducted to gain an understanding of this capacity within the Greater Hume Shire.

Part One was a conversation about the Shire; *the past, the present and the future*.

Part Two was a Business Climate Survey focussed individually on the key towns; *Culcairn, Henty, Holbrook, Jindera and Walla Walla*.

The Community Workshop was a journey of discovery providing an understanding of the drivers of economic activity in Greater Hume Shire, the impact of key businesses and organisations, and the triple bottom line issues impacting businesses in the Shire.

THE PAST

Strengths	Responses	Summary
<i>What have been our strengths as a Shire and a community (economically and socially)?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially – all towns play sport against each other, creating community spirit. • Jindera – small town attractions close to Albury – country life, education facilities are outstanding (3 primary schools). • Small town attitudes wth people know who each other, friendliness. • Numerous community options through clubs. • Cheaper housing and rates, allows a different lifestyle. • Close proximity to Albury being a larger town. • Economically farms were a lot smaller. They are now 4x larger. • Families were bigger, which resulted in a larger population. • Hobby farms have increased in the Jindera area. • There were 6 banks, 2 supermarkets, 2 hotels and Graincorp . There is now 1 bank, 1 hotel and 1 supermarket. • Economically – centred around strong agriculture. This influenced the development of business in the region, including engineering type workshops etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Proximity to major regional centre of Albury.</i> • <i>Strong sense of community.</i> • <i>Economic growth centred around rural/agri business.</i>

Supported growth	Responses	Summary
<i>What decisions have those that have gone before us made that has helped build our community both economically and socially?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water (Jindera). • Sewerage (Jindera). • Gas (Jindera). • Industrial estate (which has now folded). • Sporting facilities at Holbrook (Council grants and community). • Submarine (Holbrook). • Henty field days. • Leveraged off the local community and then sold into them, now developed where they are no longer reliant on local community – whether it be a product or service. • Less red tape in the past (Narelle). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Town planning and services.</i> • <i>Major events and attractions.</i> • <i>Sporting facilities.</i>

A different approach	Responses	Summary
<i>What could we have done in the past that would have stimulated economic activity today?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culcairn – no industrial area, developed as it fell. • Subdivision in Henty for housing (1923 was last one). • Road quality is poor – Jindera gap as an example. • Better town planning – Holbrook, very stretched out. General consensus that this applied to each of their own towns. • Had ideas but were never acted on – such as a lake development at Henty to develop a recreation centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Town planning and services.</i>

THE PRESENT

Competitive Advantage	Responses	Summary
<i>As a Shire what are our competitive advantages?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing affordability. • Location – in centre of major productive area, in particular agri-business, but then what businesses leverage off this. • Located close to Hume Highway. • Close to Albury being major city centre. • Cost effective to operate in a smaller community. • Cost of labour. • Accessing labour from farms. • Relatively cheap industrial land compared to major centres. • Good Education close – Primary, Secondary and University. • Location between Sydney/Melbourne – allows trucking accessibility –trips up and down in one day etc. • Accessibility to snow/Melbourne/Sydney and recreational facilities • Law and Order – low crime. • Pro business council that makes development easier than other areas. • Ease of commuting to and from work for employees. • Support bases – relate to neighbours, those in your community. • Do business with those around you as reputation, small community, know who you are dealing with. • Convenience – won't have to drive elsewhere to get what you need, get it within your own community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Location - proximity to major regional centre & transport .</i> • <i>Affordability - housing, land & business operations.</i> • <i>Quality of life - accessibility & sense of community.</i>

Challenges	Responses	Summary
<i>What are your barriers to becoming a larger supplier?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight & logistics costs (engaging others or doing yourself). This includes delivery of products but also if you require maintenance (eg. refrigeration maintenance as have to get this from a larger area) . • Development of a firm base, harder in a small town as it comes from numbers and don't have the population. • Less focus on local – new people to town to identify with the town. • Competitive nature of the business in construction. • Point of differentiation. • Internet has closed the world in – submitting a tender can now be Australia wide. • Good reliable staff – different expectations of youth. • Out in smaller community to keep costs down. • Feel it would be easier to start up in a larger town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Freight and logistics costs.</i> • <i>Good reliable staff.</i> • <i>Less focus on local.</i>

Challenges	Responses	Summary
<p><i>As a Shire what are the challenges we are facing, and what are the consequences of those challenges?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online retailing makes it easier to source goods for own business. However we are also losing business to online retailing. It is a two edged sword – people are wanting more information and different types of information but then compare that information. • Young people leaving town – generally based around employment and education decisions. Freeway has opened up and made it a little more accessible for them to come back due to affordability. Accessibility into Albury has increased school children travelling from Holbrook to Albury. • Freeway is a benefit and a challenge as it is more convenient for locals to shop elsewhere. • Attracting skills - perception of sleepy little towns with not much going on (especially from business perspective). Possibly understated and not self promoting. • Five major towns are so different to one another, Jindera - people tend to shift there with intention to live and work in Albury, focus may be different in each town. Walla – have a lot of people commute into Albury but find it hard to get people back the other way. Jindera doesn't seem to have same issues as other towns in shires. • Young people spend money and therefore generate business and they are leaving. • Sporting clubs/social facilities/churches seem to be suffering. • Holbrook is having a resurgence of younger farmers coming back, but not necessarily in town. • Ageing population, energy of younger people not around to drive things forward. • Younger generation is seeing that farm life is too hard – world is so accessible to them now. Education plays a part in this. • Money has become more important to the younger generation – travel to where the money is. • Red tape existing is wearing people down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Online retail competition.</i> • <i>Young people leaving town.</i> • <i>Convenience (easy to go elsewhere).</i> • <i>Attracting talent/skills.</i> • <i>Ageing population</i> • <i>Igniting and maintaining momentum (e.g. event, innovation).</i> • <i>Freight & logistic costs associated with being “out of town”.</i> • <i>Limited market size locally.</i> • <i>Staffing - quality & attraction.</i>

THE FUTURE

Opportunities	Responses	Summary
<p><i>What are the most viable opportunities currently available?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift to service industries servicing the highway (2). • Country lifestyle. • Rail line – Sydney to Melbourne (1). • Leverage off easy access to albury (7). • Australian dollar dropping. • Identify the markets and where the opportunities are. • To attract people faster internet speed and better mobile service to be more competitive is required (education, working from home etc). • Labour opportunity – other areas such as mining shift, Geelong industry shut downs creates opportunity to get them in and look after them to keep them. • Council Land development/sale. • Attract new business to shire (20). • Crushing oil plant for Canola, near where it is grown, ie value adding to raw products in region (21). • Railway line through Culcairn. • If create a distribution hub require better roads. • See rail as an opportunity only if you have a bulk load – will require quite big volumes (3). • Truck industry – not only what there is in town but ensuring continue to welcome them into town (5). • Recreation pursuits (1). • Galvinisers. • Building a supply chain to service a larger industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Attract new business.</i> • <i>Value adding to raw products locally.</i> • <i>Highway service industries.</i> • <i>Leverage accessibility to Albury.</i> • <i>Labour force mobility.</i> • <i>Attract population (lifestyle & tree-changers, urban to regional push).</i> • <i>Rail transport (bulk loads).</i> • <i>“Truck friendly” townships.</i> • <i>Major events.</i> • <i>Create tourist destination across the Shire.</i> • <i>Networking groups.</i>
<p><i>Is there an opportunity to engage more and be more collaborative with other local businesses?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses • Utilisation of a local networking group. Eg steel club. • Other major events (19). • Tourist route around the shire. Eg Urana. What are the attractions that make it a destination (4). • Create towns as tourist destinations (visit other towns) (3). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Other major events.</i> • <i>A tourist route.</i>

Create	Responses	Summary
<i>If we had a magic wand what would we create for the Shire to build economic and social activity?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culcairn – truck parking area. • Sewerage and drainage at the Jindera industrial estate. • Henty subdivision – industrial and residential. • Walla – rural lifestyle blocks. • Upgrade of roads. • Olympic Highway Albury to Wagga – need passing double lanes. • Henty truck stops – 24hr service but no where to stop. • Better internet and mobile phone coverage. • Other major events – Eg caravan 4WD show, utilize Henty field day sites – talk a lot but no action. • Henty – need a crossing at northern end of town, to remove trucks from main street. • Recreational opportunities – a lot of open space that we can utilize – bike tracks, triathlons etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Town planning - industrial & residential & lifestyle block</i> • <i>Roadway improvements</i> • <i>Truck parking</i> • <i>Major events</i> • <i>Improved internet and mobile coverage</i> • <i>Recreational opportunities</i>
Impediments	Responses	Summary
<i>What external circumstances could prevent us reaching our potential?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour • Faster internet speed • Mobile coverage • People too busy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Labour</i> • <i>Mobile and internet accessibility</i> • <i>Time</i>

4 BUSINESS LEADERS SURVEY

Business Leaders in the community are integral to community entrepreneurialism and fostering small business growth.

Key Business Leaders in each township were interviewed on the telephone to collect information and perceptions regarding the current business environment in their community.

Information collected related to the community’s resources, attitudes and opportunities relating to business activity in their individual township.



KEY BUSINESS LEADER DIRECT QUOTES

“New ideas and innovation need to be tailored to the traditionally rural based community and may be limited by the available resources (e.g. buildings). Attracting skilled labour can be difficult.”

“Sustainability and social issues into the future focus on employment and population. Adequate infrastructure is important to make life safe, convenient and easy for residents. The population needs to be maintained or increase as a minimum and needs economic, health and safety security. Street appeal, maintaining services, welfare facilities, child care and housing are further issues.”

“Council is very supportive of new business and new ideas and are good to work with. They also support businesses by doing their business locally and using our services etc. Council could continue to assist by upgrading roads... and continuing the beautification of the town. Streamlining the regulations and processes required when starting a new business (potentially through the amalgamation of some departments) would also be helpful.”

“New ideas, projects and innovation are valued and supported in the community.”

“A key sustainability issue for the future is building population, having workers and also volunteers in the community, and the facilities and infrastructure to support them.”

5 KEY FACTORS AFFECTING SUSTAINABILITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

SUSTAINABILITY

“Sustainability is (defined as) meeting the needs of the present without compromising the the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

Brundtland Commission’s report, Our Common Future, released in 1987 by the United Nations’ World Commission on Environment & Development.

In today’s economy there is an increased opening up of markets and flows of information, goods and services. With adequate infrastructure, vision and action local communities need to support the flow of goods and information into and out of their area to ensure their ongoing vitalisation. A young, skilled population looking to raise a family in a safe and beautiful place can be attracted to invigorate rural communities and ensure sustainability into the future (Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL)).

Business vitality and sustainability into the future can be summarised to include ten key areas:

1. **Opportunities and attitudes - the ability of the community to recognise, take action and follow through on available opportunities.**
2. **Quality of life – the ability of a community to attract and retain businesses and citizens, in particular young, skilled workers.**
3. **Education and training – the level of entrepreneurship skills and attitude development in the non-business population that translates to the business community.**
4. **Innovation – the propensity of a community and its citizens to develop new concepts, adapt to changes and share ideas.**
5. **Leadership, teamwork and networking - the capacity of a community to take action, with good leadership, effective teamwork and clear communication.**
6. **Role of Government and organisations - local governments and other organisations working with businesses to design processes and programs that enable business expansion or start up.**
7. **Capital and funding – the provision of support for new business through access to capital and education about financial management.**
8. **Infrastructure and business services – provision of quality support services and infrastructure to enable businesses to competitive.**
9. **Communications and connectivity - the ability of businesses to connect with each other and with outside markets.**
10. **Markets and marketing - ability to capture and expand markets locally, regionally and outside the region to maintain and build local wealth.**

GREATER HUME SHIRE ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031
Population	10,205	10,039	10,219	10,556	10,906	11,320
Change in population (5yrs)		-166	180	337	350	414
Average annual change (%)		-0.33	0.36	0.65	0.65	0.75
Households	3,884	3,980	4,123	4,280	4,444	4,612
Average household size (persons)	2.57	2.48	2.42	2.41	2.4	2.4
Population in non private dwellings	218	162	252	252	252	252
Dwellings	4,258	4,469	4,620	4,775	4,939	5,114
Dwelling occupancy rate	91.22	89.06	89.24	89.63	89.98	90.18



COMMON CHALLENGES

Building community capacity is key to the growth and ongoing success of Greater Hume Shire and the communities within. The research has identified a number of opportunities within each community that will contribute to building the capacity of that community. There are a number of key findings with regard the Greater Hume Shire as a whole which potentially impacts its ability to effectively build community capacity across the Shire in a focused cohesive direction.

TOWNSHIPS

During the consultative process it was clear that community leaders from each of the five townships had difficulty in considering issues across the broader Shire, with discussion quickly returning to the situation in their individual township. There was also differing levels of engagement with the project across the various townships.

In looking to identify competitive advantage that may be leveraged, it was clear each community had distinct community profiles and each offers a different opportunity to the next. Having said that, the challenges faced by each township had commonality and were not especially unique with key themes emerging. In exploring linkages that may lead to focused activity to build community capacity, it is clear a more collaborative outlook will need to be adopted rather than the siloed approach which currently exists.

We are of the understanding that these insular perspectives have been forged over generations of cross-Shire rivalry's. Shifting to a broader Shire view will take a clear vision well communicated and executed with high levels of engagement to create a new paradigm of cooperation.

We found that, by and large, community leaders had a high level of engagement with and gratitude toward the Greater Hume Shire for the activities being undertaken in helping support each community. This is a positive sign in looking to build whole of Shire activity.

Given the commonality of challenges faced across the five townships we are of the view there exists an opportunity to meet the challenges together and utilise the competitive advantages of each to drive whole of Shire outcomes.

DEPARTING YOUNGER GENERATIONS

In today's knowledge and internet economies, more and more jobs can be done from anywhere in the world. As this trend continues, people looking for a place to settle down and raise a family are less dependent upon looking for a place where there are physically lots of jobs. Having said that, the bulk of jobs are undertaken in traditional workplaces.

Research indicates young adults looking for a community to call home value the following:

- A vibrant and varied cultural life
- Diversity of educational options (for themselves and their children)
- Health care options
- Diversity of people/community (with different interests, backgrounds, occupations)
- Progressive and open local government
- A clean environment
- An entrepreneurial mindset, where new ideas are valued

There is no doubt that a key issue in rural townships is youth are frequently moving away due to availability of jobs and greater career options. Having said that it is also clear that many young people value an interesting place to live with variety, things to do and a positive sense of community.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUSINESS SERVICES

The implementation of high speed broadband will assist in leveraging many of the competitive advantages identified.

Faster, more effective communication when combined with the availability and access to freight and logistics infrastructure as well as low cost of land may provide the catalyst to attract a significant cluster business. This provides for both local employment opportunities as well as supporting potential upstream businesses supplying goods and services.

Culcairn, Jindera and Walla Walla are expected to come online under the national broadband network in mid 2015. The second opportunity high speed broadband offers is the ability for people to work from home and in remote locations.

Commercial online activity is increasing dramatically with over 40% of all retail transactions expected to be done on line by 2020 (IBIS World).

LACK OF AVAILABLE WORKFORCE SKILLS

The workshops series identified that there is a general shortage of skilled workers availability across the Shire. This is very much a chicken and egg dilemma. In order to attract a suitably skilled workforce there must be the businesses to support the workforce but without the workforce it can be problematic to set up businesses. Attracting and retaining skilled workers especially young workers as discussed earlier, can be particularly problematic.

The consultative process also identified that business education and training was an area which would benefit from a focused approach. Attracting entrepreneurial endeavours, start up businesses and service industries was identified as a major opportunity. This would be accelerated should a larger business which could support these activities be attracted to the region.

A suitably equipped business which offers workers the opportunity to develop their skills will impact the available labour pool and ultimately increase the sustainability of rural communities.

AGEING POPULATION

Health care service providers are one of Australia's fastest growing industry sectors. In an ageing population as is evidenced in Greater Hume Shire, this can provide an opportunity for commercial businesses in providing support and accommodation services. Aged care services create an employment base for community.

The major challenge in presenting this as a viable opportunity for GHS is that by and large, a viable health service model relies on economies of scale and are more suited to operating in a large regional centre.

As discussed one the GHS's competitive advantages is the accessibility by road to a significant regional centre being Albury Wodonga. Having said this, a further challenge identified is the lack of public transport options which can hinder accessibility for those unable to drive.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

We make the following recommendations in building community capacity across the Greater Hume Shire and sustainability of the five townships.



1. ATTRACT YOUNG FAMILIES

In making this recommendation we are looking to leverage the whole of Shire competitive advantages of safety, high levels of housing affordability, current education facilities and accessibility of major regional centres.

Key success factors

- Appropriate developments which appeal to first home buyers.
- Attracting developers prepared to undertake these developments.
- Effective town planning which makes these developments a priority.
- An engaging marketing campaign which positions the communities as appealing places to live and raise a family.
- Appropriate transportation networks which provide an adequate service to enable families to commute.
- Appropriate sport and recreation facilities which enable young families to engage with their communities, alleviate isolation and interact effectively.
- Lifestyle blocks.
- Childcare

2. CREATE EFFECTIVE BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE

It is critical that if the Shire is to attract business and achieve the economic growth it must ensure that that business has the appropriate infrastructure, which will enable it to compete effectively against competitors in large regional centres, capital cities and across global markets.

This recommendation leverages access to road and rail transport logistics, and addresses the challenge around potentially attracting a significant business and the ability to sustain supporting goods and service business. It also builds the skills bank of the region and provides further impetus for other businesses to start or relocate to the region.

Key success factors

- High speed broadband and mobile telephone coverage.
- Appropriate levels of power availability.
- Appropriate levels of water availability.
- A road network which is of a high standard and allows ease of passage.
- Appropriate training and education opportunities.

Ultimately with increased infrastructure the Greater Hume Shire would look to attract a significant business to the region, such as the Canola processing factory which was identified during the workshop.

3. CREATE A TOURIST DESTINATION

A competitive advantage of the district is the ability to stage major events as well as the submarine at Holbrook. In making this recommendation we are looking to build on the accessibility of the region to major road infrastructure and accessibility to significant regional centres. Tourism infrastructure can take a long time to develop and requires a high level of focus and collaboration. Examples of tourist infrastructure which maybe required includes but is not limited to:

- Suitable accommodation facilities.
- Tourist attractions.
- Effective signage and maps.
- Reputational resources.
- Effective marketing programs.
- Ongoing town beautification projects and streetscapes that showcase towns and make visitation attractive.

We recommend building upon the Henty Field Day success by creating a calendar of events which draws people to the region.

This can be supported by a local trail which takes day visitors to attractions in each township. Ultimately the region would look to attract a number of attractions and food and beverage outlets which support the needs of visiting tourists. It is envisaged this opportunity could be taken up by all five townships which are the subject of this report.

In the initial stages the tourist route and events calendar will look to attract:

- Families looking for a day experience staying/ living in Albury/ Wodonga, Wagga or touring.
- Caravans utilising the major routes in undertaking their travels.

We are not of the view that the events need necessarily be agriculturally based, but could be a broad range of festivals, sporting events or commercial 4wd and camping activities.

4. DEVELOP A UNIQUE REGIONAL BRAND

Whilst each township is unique we do not have the sense that the Greater Hume Shire has a unique brand and message which creates a sense of identity across the Shire.

The current moto "Simply Greater" fails to capture what is unique and different about the region. We are of the view that a unique brand would act as a catalyst to break down parochial town based alliances and help realign the community focus to a broader Shire view, whilst still maintaining each townships sense of identity.

The brand could be a unique component of building the region as an events and tourist destination and support the ability to better carry the marketing messages into a crowded marketplace.

5. CATER FOR AN AGEING POPULATION

The population is ageing and an opportunity exists to capture commercial residential and service industries that cater for an ageing population. This recommendation leverages the housing affordability and the community activities that have been identified. The communities of the Greater Hume Shire have also been recognised as safe places to live, which is attractive to an ageing demographic.

Key Success Factors

- Accessibility to health services.
- Accessibility to suitable accommodation facilities that are scalable dependant on levels of service and support required.
- Accessibility to public transport options.
- Community and recreation groups that build engagement with new people within the community and mitigate isolation.
- Transition from farms to towns.
- Aged friendly infrastructure such as gardens, wide streetscapes, ramp and handrails.

6. TRUCK AND TRANSPORT FRIENDLY TOWNS

The unique transportation routes throughout the Greater Hume Shire lend themselves to servicing an ever increasing volume of truck traffic through the region. This recommendation is driven directly from the workshop series and individual business climate surveys.

Key success factors

- Relevant infrastructure which provides adequate and easily accessible parking for trucks on route.
- Food and service industries that service the needs of truck drivers and transport companies in driving through the Shire.
- Internal infrastructure of towns that make for safe passage of trucks through towns, ideally separating the transport route from the general retail precinct.
- Attractive rest areas and truck friendly stopping bays which provide a suitable place to rest.

7. ATTRACT NEW BUSINESS

Whilst it is never easy the Greater Hume Shire holds competitive advantages, which if business infrastructure is improved could appeal to significant businesses.

There is an opportunity for new and complementary businesses to expand and/or relocate to the Shire. This is particularly so in support of the large agricultural holdings, which are consolidating and increasing in scale.

This recommendation was directly identified in the workshop through the two key opportunities identified, being the canola processing plant and attract new business. Along with the prospect of attracting and building infrastructure, which have the advantage of processing close to the source, it also leverages the proximity to the national rail and road network.

A further advantage to this, as a strategic focus, is it will likely give rise to a cluster of downstream entrepreneurial endeavours that will service the larger business.

Key Success Factors

- Effective sites identified and earmarked for this style of development.
- Effective marketing of the opportunity.
- Effective business infrastructure to support the endeavour.
- A whole of Shire approach to economic development across the region.
- The ability to effectively access the national road and rail infrastructure.

8. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

During the workshop a number of challenges were identified in moving from a small business to a larger business that could potentially service national and international markets.

This maybe overcome by the Greater Hume Shire Economic Development Unit proactively brokering strategic partnerships. This will be necessary should the Shire look to develop the tourist destination recommendation and could also be utilised to service large contracts utilising a number of local suppliers. Such partnerships could be most effective when enacted on a project by project basis.

Key Success Factors

- Willingness for businesses across the Shire to work collaboratively with each other to service significant contracts.
- Identification of appropriate businesses to undertake strategic partnerships on a project by project basis.
- Clear rules and contractual obligations to avoid individual businesses operating in self interest.
- A clear focus on the strategic intent and a collaborative way to work towards this.



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