

# Employment and Economic Development Committee Meeting Record 10 March 2021



Location:	Zoom Meeting
Date:	10 March 2021
Time	Started at: 4.02pm Closed at: 5.45pm
Chair	Jamie Barclay, Unit Manager Economic Development and Project Delivery
File Ref	F2018/00100

**Present:**

William Adames, John Asquith

**External Representatives present:**

Paula Martin – NSW Business Chamber

**Council Staff present:**

Natalia Cowley – Director Corporate Affairs, Jamie Barclay – Unit Manager Economic Development and Project Delivery, Louise Fisher – Chief External Funding Coordinator (left 4.49pm), Christine Jarvis – Business Development Manager, Zoie Magann – Advisory Group Support Officer

**Item 1                    Apologies, Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country**

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Apologies received: Mike Goodman, John Mouland – Regional Development Australia Central Coast

The Chairperson welcomed the Advisory Group and completed an Acknowledgement of Country statement.

**Item 2                    Disclosure of Interest**

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No disclosures were received.

**Item 3                    Confirmation of Previous Meeting Records**

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The Advisory Group confirmed the Meeting Record from 25 November 2020.

The Advisory Group members introduced themselves to Natalia Cowley (Director Corporate Affairs) as this was the first meeting Natalia has attended given the organisation restructure.

#### **Item 4 Update on Infrastructure Working Group**

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Louise Fisher (Chief External Funding Coordinator) provided a presentation on the Infrastructure Priorities Working Group.

The following key points were noted:

- Provided recap on history and composition of group which was established in 2020 (Advisory Group previously received info at 14 July 2020 meeting).
- Reiterated that Working Group doesn't influence government planning – it is an advocacy group that works with other key stakeholders to champion sustainable economic outcomes for region. Central Coast is identified as key growth area in NSW so is on Minister's radar.
- Provided a high-level overview of plans for various employment lands identified in the region.
- Working Group is also advocating for transport connectivity with regard to accelerating projects, as this is an identified priority given current state of transport in region.
- Regarding visitor economy, the Working Group is focusing on sporting events which relate to development of sporting facilities in Gosford and Tuggerah.
- Environment and water security is also being considered with regard to long-term coastal protection and an Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan. Unsure of exactly what the infrastructure priorities are for these projects, but will continue to assess.
- Noted that Greater Sydney Commission has seven infrastructure priorities, some of which include projects on the Central Coast. This list is not currently publicly available as it is still being finalised.
- Advisory Group thanked and congratulated Louise for her advocacy on behalf of Council and involvement in the Working Group.
- Concerns raised about future of projects given Council's current financial situation and that Council's Chief External Funding Coordinator position has been made redundant as part of recovery process. Natalia Cowley noted there likely will be some reduction in response to Council's current financial situation, but projects will remain a priority for the Economic Development team with access to resources. Louise confirmed many projects sit with other bodies (e.g. RDA and Transport for NSW) so advocacy will remain, regardless of Council's position.
- Member suggested that climate change be incorporated as part of environmental considerations (e.g. development of strategy for climate change regarding economic development). Staff advised this doesn't fall under infrastructure priorities but is still important – there is internal consultation with environmental experts for projects.

#### **Item 5 Update on Economic Development Strategy, Economic Recovery and Resilience Framework and Council's Business Recovery Plan**

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Natalia Cowley (Director Corporate Affairs) provided an overview of Council's current financial situation and Council's response with the Business Recovery Plan. Information about this is on Council's Financial Situation webpage: <https://www.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/council/news/councils-financial-situation>

Regarding Council's asset sale it was noted that the lots that make up the Council owned Gosford Consolidated Holdings will be coming to market this month. Consultation with the independent Property Advisory Panel continues. The Council asset sale program will have a positive impact for economic development as previously underutilised lands can now be activated.

Jamie Barclay (Unit Manager Economic Development and Project Delivery) provided an update on the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and Economic Recovery and Resilience Framework (ERRF). Both documents are publicly available on [Council's website](#).

The following key points were noted:

- Central Coast continues to track comparatively well with regard to Covid-19 recovery, even with interstate borders reopening (e.g. \$8mil of revenue from AirBnB in January 2021 when spike in case numbers occurred).
- There are still negative implications such as housing stress, as more people started buying and renting in the region which has impacted property supply resulting in rapid upward pressure on house and rental prices.
- Provided overview of aspects of EDS underway, noting some deliverables have been affected by current financial situation but there are still things progressing.

**Action:** Natalia Cowley or delegate to chat offline with John Asquith about depreciation with regard with capital works expenditure.

**Action:** Jamie Barclay to share the draft positioning and partnering document prepared by Astrolab once adopted by Council.

## **Item 6 Update from Business NSW**

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Paula Martin (NSW Business Chamber) provided an update from Business NSW.

The following key points were noted:

- Good news that wage subsidy for apprentices has seen rise (27%) in youth employment as at end of February compared to last year. Media release about impact on Central Coast will be released shortly.
- Business confidence is at highest it's been in past 10 years, however there is still a skills shortage.
- Region had unexpected upswing for employment to population ratio in context of Covid. Unemployment rate is lower than state average (good), however we're five points lower than state average for participation rate (bad). This data suggests there is more casual engagement on Coast.
- There are currently 18,012 JobSeeker applications and 2,253 Youth Allowance applications across the region – levels staying stagnant.
- JobKeeper ends soon and was at peak in July 2020 when there were 11,814 business accessing JobKeeper. This reduced to 5,215 in November. Areas subject to Health Orders such as hospitality continue to suffer.
- Currently on upward trend for job vacancies – construction industry are concerned about depleting pipeline.
- Regarding anticipated effects of stimulus withdrawal – approx. 30% of businesses are likely not prepared for this and are in vulnerable positions. Business conditions survey is being undertaken to collect feedback on impacts.
- Airline industry is not expected to recover for at least 12 months, meaning domestic travel is likely to continue going well given international travel is limited. Noted Australia was previously a popular destination for large scale business events however quarantine requirements are limiting this.

## **Item 7 General Business and Close**

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The Advisory Group reviewed the Action Log and staff provided updates on outstanding matters.

- a) John Asquith raised topic of eco-tourism being a good opportunity for region's economic development. John previously received contact from Council's Marketing and Tourism team about this and would like an update.

**Action:** Marketing and Tourism team to chat offline with John Asquith about eco-tourism opportunities.

- b) Jamie Barclay noted Terrigal Boardwalk and rockpool upgrade is nearing completion (estimated to open middle of April 2021). This is a good drawcard to region in terms of tourism.
- c) Jamie Barclay noted staff have been looking at bringing some Advisory Groups together based on shared interests. Proposal is being tabled at Council shortly and members will be updated as matter progresses.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm

**Next Meeting:**                      **To be confirmed**