

# Employment and Economic Development Committee Meeting Record 23 September 2020



Location:	Zoom Meeting	
Date:	23 September 2020	
Time	Started at: 3.04pm	Closed at: 5pm
Chair	Councillor Jane Smith	
File Ref	F2018/00100	

## **Present:**

Councillor Chris Holstein (left 4.16pm), Councillor Kyle MacGregor, Councillor Bruce McLachlan, Councillor Jane Smith, William Adames, John Asquith, Mike Goodman (joined 4.02pm)

## **External Attendees:**

Tim Burt – NSW Business Chamber (joined 3.36pm, left 4.29pm), Paula Martin – NSW Business Chamber, Michelle Van de Mortel – TAFE NSW

## **Council Staff present:**

Ricardo Martello – Executive Manager Innovation and Futures, Christine Jarvis – Business Development Manager, Celia Pennycook – Social Planner (left 4.30pm), Zoie Magann – Advisory Group Support Officer

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

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Apologies received: Councillor Jeff Sundstrom

The Chairperson, Councillor Jane Smith, noted apologies for rescheduling the meeting from 1 September 2020.

Councillor Jane Smith declared the meeting open and completed an Acknowledgement of Country statement and Connection to Land Statement.

It was noted that Councillor Rebecca Gale has resigned from the Advisory Group.

## **Item 2 Disclosure of Interest**

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Councillor Bruce McLachlan declared a less than significant non-pecuniary interest as he had done previously, as a business owner on the Central Coast.

Councillor Jane Smith declared a less than significant non-pecuniary interest as a board member of the Marine Discovery Centre, which was mentioned a few times throughout the meeting with regard to employment opportunities.

### **Item 3 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Records**

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The Advisory Group confirmed the Meeting Record from 14 July 2020.

The Advisory Group reviewed the Action Log, noting that some actions are still pending and updates will be provided when available.

### **Item 4 Update on Economic Development Strategy (Action 7 – Standing Item)**

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Christine Jarvis (Business Development Manager) provided an update on the draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and supplementary draft Economic Recovery and Resilience Framework.

The following key points were noted:

- Both documents were on public exhibition for 28 days starting 22 June 2020.
- Feedback was collated for consideration and a report is going to Council on Monday 28 September 2020 regarding adoption of both documents.
- A statement regarding pandemic was added to both documents – this was previously announced to the Advisory Group via email.
- Once documents are adopted, the Advisory Group will be able to review the associated Action Plan and consider way forward.
- There are six key aspects of achieving outcomes identified in the draft Framework: leadership, governance, performance, resourcing, accountability, and agility.
- Noted that Federal budget is being announced in October, which will help guide recovery from pandemic, particularly with regard to the funding and support available.
- Members discussed info sharing vs. actions – some interested in championing change and getting quick wins (short term vs. long term), rather than receiving more data/presentations.

**Action:** Staff to provide further info on v-shaped economic recovery model for Advisory Group info.

**Action:** Paula Martin to liaise with Chief Economist from NSW Business Chamber regarding info on how regional NSW is recovering from pandemic.

**Action:** Staff to invite representative from Hunter Research Foundation to future meeting to share their findings with regard to pandemic and economic recovery.

**Action:** Ricardo Martello to provide economic data as available to Advisory Group members (for consideration outside of meetings).

**Action:** Michelle Van de Mortel to share info on TAFE NSW VET Training initiatives with Advisory Group, including types of funding available, target audiences and how to champion training for employment.

### **Item 5 Youth Unemployment (Action 26)**

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Celia Pennycook (Social Planner) provided presentation on youth unemployment.

The following key points were noted:

- Unemployment rates for July 2020 show Central Coast (4.2%) faring better than NSW (7.2%) and Australia (7.5%) as whole. We typically have higher rate but are currently at lowest for at least a decade.

- Rates reflect some of pandemic impact, but don't include those who have reduced work hours or pay (difference between unemployment and underemployment). This means there are people not included in data who are still struggling due to changes.
- Central Coast still has lower participation rates (people working or looking for work) comparatively, possibly due to higher percentage of ageing population and people with disabilities.
- Figures for youth unemployment have decreased since last census, however young people are still most impacted by pandemic (particularly with regard to mental health). Younger workers are more likely to lose income and not qualify for government payments.
- Currently there are 24,962 young people working or looking for work:
  - 8,815 employed full time
  - 11,991 employed part time
  - 3,634 unemployed
- Youth unemployment rate by district shows highest in San Remo-Budgewoi, and lowest in Mountains District. Suburb with greatest number of unemployed young people is Umina Beach-Pearl Beach-Patonga, and lowest is Kariong.
- There are many barriers for young people with employment:
  - Only 0.5% of positions are entry level.
  - Number of part time jobs for 15-19 year olds has halved since 2008.
  - 1 in 5 young people out of work for a year or more (numbers doubled since 2009).
  - Now competing with more experienced people for fewer jobs due to pandemic.
- Pathways into sustained employment for youth include more entry level jobs, matching training to jobs in growth industries, and offering support for disadvantaged young people.
- Member noted that organisation is struggling to find RTO to partner with to provide entry level roles. Michelle advised there is capacity in TAFE NSW to address this.
- Discussion around jobs available on Central Coast pre-pandemic and now – in May 2020 there were only around 250 jobs available, but now back to around 1,000.
- Central Coast Virtual Jobs Fair happening on 30 September to help address employment. More info here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/central-coast-virtual-jobs-fair-registration-118245622841>
- Concerns raised about what will happen once government support is reduced (e.g. when JobKeeper payments and the like are suspended).
- Staff noted that Council runs work experience programs for disadvantaged groups.

**Action:** Michelle Van de Mortel and John Asquith to talk offline about training opportunities for entry level positions.

## **Item 6 Update from NSW Business Chamber (Actions 31 and 36)**

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Tim Burt (Policy Manager Workforce Skills – NSW Business Chamber) provided the Advisory Group with an update on the recently released COVID-19 Youth Review.

The following key points were noted:

- Youth survey recently completed to collect feedback regarding careers and impacts of pandemic. Report info here: <https://www.skillsroad.com.au/download-covid-youth-review#Download%20Report>
- Results show increase in youth being open to changing plans and undertaking jobs that aren't limited to interest area, to help optimise career stability and ensure financial security. Related concern that there may not be enough jobs in the future. Youth also want better industry and career related advice at school, and for career related discussions to start earlier.
- Good news story that Supporting Apprentices and Trainees subsidy has been extended to March 2021.

- There has been drop in apprentice commencement numbers. 2019 had 7,019 and there is only 4,492 forecast for 2020.
- Noted that job vacancies on Central Coast have bounced back dramatically to pre-pandemic levels (1,000 – 1,200). This aligns with comments that employers are actually struggling to fill positions.
- Currently exploring options for pre-apprenticeship programs, which TAFE NSW have also increased options for.
- Highlighted importance of Council supporting local schools to understand processes and how to promote local jobs to boost economy.
- Noted Kickstart scheme in UK as good model. Scheme subsidises work placements for young people receiving social security payments.
- Important to consider transport models in conjunction with employment – how can Council support mobility of young people to undertake training and influence jobs.
- Suggestion made regarding establishment of a Sub-Committee of interested Advisory Group members, who would focus on promoting local jobs in short term (matching ideas, resources and opportunities to promote economic activity).

**Action:** Tim Burt to provide one-page info sheet on key opportunities to support youth employment and pathways for consideration of the Advisory Group.

**Action:** Krystie Bryant to provide info on options for supporting apprenticeships (what is already done and what could be implemented), with consideration to Kickstart Scheme in UK.

## **Item 7 Working from Home Opportunities (Action 37)**

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Ricardo Martello (Executive Manager Innovation and Futures) provided a presentation on opportunities generated by working from home (WFH).

The following key points were noted:

- As previously discussed, there is significant opportunity to generate economic benefit for region as less people are leaving the Central Coast for work in current pandemic (typically 44,200 commuters daily).
- Revisited data regarding Central Coast economy, noting trends across different sectors, with view to understand how to capitalise on opportunities.
- Ricardo provided preview of "Imagine the new Central Coast" video – promo drafted for retaining economic benefit locally in the new climate.
- Staff are advocating with State government for investments in digital infrastructure which will support WFH.
- Research continues with regard to commuters and people WFH in terms of personal lives, wellbeing and work.
- Also looking at options for coworking/remote working spaces on the Central Coast. There are currently 7 of these spaces available on the Central Coast (all in different suburbs so not competing with each other). Challenge is that Council is restricted with promoting specific spaces due to governance considerations.
- Might be worthwhile to leverage experience of people already benefiting from WFH, as well as highlighting environmental benefits in promos. Such considerations may appeal to large corporations, particularly those who pay high commercial rent and wish to adopt more sustainable practise.

**Action:** Staff to share "Imagine the new Central Coast" promo video and data on working from home research with Advisory Group when available.

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## **Item 8                    Advisory Group Plan Moving Forward (Action 38)**

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The Advisory Group agreed to focus on the Action Plan from the EDS at the next meeting, assuming it is adopted by Council before then.

Frank Sammut (Central Coast Industry Connect) and Peter Crane (Central Coast Food Alliance) have been invited to the next meeting to discuss food and agriculture initiatives for the region.

**Action:** Advisory Group Support Officer to circulate details of EDS adoption following Council meeting on 28 September 2020, as well as any other relevant info to be unpacked at next meeting (dedicate one hour to topic).

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## **Item 9                    General Business and Close**

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It was noted that October is small business month and there are a number of events running:

- Central Coast Council was successful in getting State grant to promote initiative supporting businesses moving to digital platforms. More info here: <https://www.businessmonth.nsw.gov.au/activity/future-proof-your-business-with-this-digital-activation-free-on-demand-program/>
- Virtual Job Fair happening as previously mentioned.
- 2020 Central Coast Women in Business Event (not run by Council) happening at The Entertainment Grounds. More info here: <https://www.businessmonth.nsw.gov.au/activity/2020-central-coast-women-in-business-event/>
- Bigger Backyard Virtual Business Expo expected late October – will include virtual stalls and guest speakers. Link will be shared once available.

**Action:** Topic of small business and cooperatives to be discussed at future meeting, with regard to opportunities for the future.

The meeting closed at 5pm

**Next Meetings:**                    **Tuesday 27 October 2020**  
   **4pm – 6pm**  
   **Zoom Meeting (TBC)**