

Employment and Economic Development Committee Meeting Record 25 November 2020



Location:	Zoom Meeting
Date:	25 November 2020
Time	Started at: 4.01pm Closed at: 5.49pm
Chair	Jacqueline Svedas, Business Economic Development Manager Jamie Barclay, Unit Manager Economic Development and Project Delivery
File Ref	F2018/00100

Present:

John Asquith, Mike Goodman

External Representatives present:

Paula Martin – NSW Business Chamber, Frank Sammut – Central Coast Industry Connect (left 4.55pm), Peter Crane – Central Coast Industry Connect (joined 4.07pm, left 4.55pm)

Council Staff present:

Ricardo Martello – Executive Manager Innovation and Futures (joined 4.27pm), Jamie Barclay – Unit Manager Economic Development and Project Delivery (joined 4.27pm), Jacqueline Svedas – Business Economic Development Manager, Zoie Magann – Advisory Group Support Officer

Item 1 Apologies, Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

Apologies received: William Adames,

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

Item 2 Disclosure of Interest

No disclosures were received.

Item 3 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Records

The Advisory Group confirmed the Meeting Record from 23 September 2020.

The Advisory Group reviewed the Action Log. It was agreed that some items would be merged for addressing at the next meeting. It was also noted that some items had been raised by Councillor members, and would best be addressed at a later date given the current suspension order.

Item 4 Food and Agriculture Industry Initiatives and Opportunities for Region

Frank Sammut and Peter Crane (Central Coast Industry Connect, CCIC) provided a verbal update on the Central Coast Food Alliance with regard to food and agriculture industry initiatives.

The following key points were noted:

- Mid 2018 CCIC secured Federal funding to set up a food cluster in Central Coast to explore how leading sectors could unite to improve food and agriculture opportunities in region.
- Aim is to support entrepreneurs in high growth sector as Central Coast has great capacity for thriving food industry. Noted benefits of leading manufacturers being in close proximity (Mars, Sanitarium, Life Health Foods).
- Steering Committee was set up to help guide program – largely centred around operational issues and supporting small businesses so that they can grow (e.g. improving equipment and systems).
- Program helps place university students in local positions which helps drive employment growth, as well as providing advice on how to make courses relevant to leading industries.
- Also working with local high schools through P-TECH and STEM programs by providing teachers with relevant resources.
- Have noticed significant lift in university contributions with many quality graduates. This has led to increased recruitment in leading industries.
- Frank recently met with CSIRO to explore opportunities for collaboration and growth.
- Main challenges for region: interstate competition (other states offer better incentives for emerging food companies to relocate resulting in loss of suppliers locally), access to skilled workers, funding available. Noted there is currently abundance of local jobs which are struggling to be filled by skilled workers.
- Regarding youth unemployment, region continues to be about 6th worst in state although current figures are lower than pre-COVID. This is likely due to number of factors including systemic skills issue, access to transport, cultural issues, may also be exacerbated by support payments (JobSeeker).
- Noted there has been a drop in JobSeeker recipients as many have found work. For every job there are now estimated 15 JobSeekers, as opposed to 36 from last month.
- Region appears to be recovering at faster rate when compared to others. Commuter base is also exponentially growing as surrounding regions continue to expand.
- Paula recently met with Forsythes Recruitment and they are experiencing delays in filling low level jobs also, with it taking up to 3 months to fill positions. This is being experienced in other coastal towns too.
- Good news story: recent announcement of State funding for food industry will see \$100k granted to help build business resilience in agriculture sector and identify growth opportunities. This is result of bushfire recovery schemes.

Action: Transport connectivity issues and opportunities to be further discussed at future meeting.

Item 5 Update on Economic Development Strategy (Action 7 – Standing Item)

Jacqueline Svedas (Business Economic Development Manager) provided an update on the draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS).

The following key points were noted:

- Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and Economic Recovery and Resilience Framework were adopted by Council at 28 September 2020 meeting.
- Greater Sydney Commission have been engaged by State government to help guide economic growth in region, which provides good opportunity for collaboration and prioritising actions.

- Economic Recovery and Resilience Framework was developed in context of COVID. As things have become clearer it seems that region is heading towards stronger recovery than initially thought.
- Staff will continue to review implementation plan in light of Council's developing situation and will update Advisory Group as applicable.
- Members confirmed they are happy to meet informally or as required to help progress action and support Council moving forward with EDS.
- Noted importance of harnessing domestic travel opportunities given restricted international travel. As well as growing food/agriculture sector there is also strong growth with ecotourism.
- There is a huge influx of people relocating from Sydney and surrounds, making the housing market very competitive. May lead to issues as people return to workplaces and commute to Sydney increases (less people using public transport means more people on the M1).
- Staff noted Council will soon commence operational planning for 2021-22, which offers opportunity for Advisory Group members to identify areas for priority. Although resources are currently restricted with Council's financial position, it's important to consider future planning.

Action: Advisory Group to revisit top 10 priority list provided by staff to help develop strategy at future meeting.

Item 6 Update from Business NSW

Paula Martin (NSW Business Chamber) provided an update on the Bigger Backyard program.

The following key points were noted:

- Bigger Backyard involved 603 Central Coast businesses who pledged to spend locally in efforts to generate income for region.
- Yearly pledge value was \$30.57M, resulting in approximately \$91.71M yearly economic impact.
- Virtual trade expo held 22 October 2020 as part of program to help connect businesses.
- Technology used to bring expo to life remotely and make event more realistic. Central Coast Stadium was used as virtual hub – attendees could access stalls and be connected with service providers.
- Partnered with Hit FM and Triple M to livestream young local musicians during expo. Noted that Arts and Music industry was heavily impacted by COVID so this offered great opportunity to showcase local talent and opportunities for entertainment.
- NSW Business Chamber currently working with Council to see if funding for program could be extended over next few years given the success. Great example of collaboration between local businesses and the Chambers.

Item 7 Workshop Advisory Group Priorities and Action Items

This was discussed as part of the previous items. It was noted that all Advisory Groups may be moving to quarterly meetings as a result of Council's current financial situation. Members agreed they are happy to meet informally to workshop priorities as applicable.

Action: Informal meeting to be held late January 2021 to workshop priority items (preferably in-person if possible).

Item 8 General Business and Close

No general business was discussed.

The meeting closed at 5.49pm

Next Meetings:

**Informal Meeting
Late January 2021
Location TBC**

**Ordinary Meeting
Wednesday 24 February 2021
4pm – 6pm
Location TBC**