

Cooma-Monaro Country Growth Strategy Program

Industry and Industrial Land Audit Project Polo Flat Main Street / Small Town Project Addendum Report

funded by
Cooma-Monaro Shire Council
in partnership with
NSW Government
Department of State and Regional Development
through the
NSW Government
Developing Regional Resources Program and
Main Street / Small Town Program

Background

This report completes the Polo Flat business survey element of the Main Street / Small Town project and the Industry and Industrial Land project.

A meeting was held for Cooma-Monaro business people on June 21, 2005 to present an overview of the Cooma-Monaro Country Growth Strategy Program and the outcomes of the two projects mentioned above. Council-Monaro Shire Council (CMSC), the Snowy-Monaro Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) and Cooma Chamber of Commerce (CCC) hosted the evening.

156 invitations were issued to businesses involved in the business survey, Polo Flat businesses, other industrial businesses, Councilors, Council Officials, Cooma Unlimited and Cooma Chamber of Commerce members.

44 people attended the presentation made by CMSC's Economic Development and Tourism Promotion Officer Caroline Fox and the BEC Manager, John Mercer. Deputy Mayor Katrin Hackney introduced the presentation. DSRD Regional Manager Barry McDonald was in attendance.

The outcomes of the Business Survey are included as part of the Industry and Industrial Land Audit Report. Relevant Polo Flat responses have been identified in the survey separately. The meeting was opened up for discussion to look at business issues and opportunities.

Meeting Outcomes

Issues

- Business people in Michelago and the northern parts of the Shire need to be more integrated into the Cooma-Monaro business community - more networking.
- Fast tracking DA process - streamlining and providing the right information at the right time - the major issues appear to be delays when small businesses are involved. Most are only likely to have a major development for their business requiring DA approval once in the business life cycle. There is therefore little knowledge or understanding on the DA process.
- Update of Council website - pages must be updated and kept current
- More efficient maintenance and access to the local business database - access through a Cooma Portal
- Skilled labour shortage - need ideas on how to address (eg. Apprenticeship schemes to be improved).- need to communicate to Monaro and Bombala Workplace Learning Program.
- Bredbo - northern part of Shire not receiving "shire-wide" mail-drops
- Retail weekend open hours - very few shops open
- Council has not communicated decisions regarding Commissioner St -in the Polo Flat Master Plan to community and Polo Flat businesses

Opportunities

- Manufacture of Water Tanks
- Lobbying for Public Service Departments and Facilities (Government “people factories”)
- Incentive packages to encourage entrepreneurs (including real estate – commercial land with low or no rates)
- Establishment of a Community Bank to assist finance of business opportunities
- Improve public facilities in Polo Flat (eg. Road) that improves the overall appearance, encourages businesses to improve own presentation and thereby make it more attractive as an industrial estate to market for business relocation.
- Learn from experience by conducting “Exit Interviews” with closing businesses to identify external issues (non internal business issues) that could have been dealt with.
- Education (tertiary) to be encouraged and developed
- Investigate option of encouraging residential development in north of shire (capturing from ACT)

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggestions from the authors of the report

- CCC to look at ways to involve businesses outside Cooma township in their activities
- CMSC to develop a simplified diagrammatic representation of the DA process and a Q & A section that highlights some of the major issues (from past history) that can occur. All this should be in hard copy and web-based.
- CMSC to follow-up on the recommendations in the Industry and Industrial Land Audit on DA benchmarking
- CMSC, Cooma Call Centre, BEC, Monaro Library, Cooma Unlimited and CCC to have representatives review existing electronic databases and gain an agreement for the purpose and maintenance of a local business database
- CMSC in conjunction with CCC approach Federal or State Government for funding to do a local skills audit and develop strategies to overcome the shortfall areas, possibly under the CMCGS program..
- CMSC under the CMCGS Program investigate some Government Departments to look for potential for relocation or establishment of Departments / Facilities in Cooma.
- CMSC to advise Polo Flat businesses and the community of their decision regarding the Commissioner Street extension to Polo Flat
- CMSC to review the practicality of business relocation incentive schemes
- CCC to consider strategies that would encourage increased weekend retail opening hours
- CCC and CMSC open dialogue with Polo Flat businesses to review what can be done by Council, landowners and businesses to continue the beautification of Polo Flat.