

# Wee Waa Business Community Marketing Plan

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# First Impressions

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## General

This information has been gathered from a site visit to Wee Waa which included an orientation tour of the area by car, a visit to the Namoi Echo Museum and a walking tour of the main street.

Kate Schwager of the Wee Waa Chamber of Commerce acted as my guide for the onsite visit.

Additional information was gathered from meetings with Chamber committee members and Penny Phelps, Tourism Manager for the Narrabri Shire.

Reports referenced include

- ▶ Wee Waa Community Economic Development Strategic Plan 2007
- ▶ Wee Waa Business Retention and Expansion Survey 2006
- ▶ Narrabri Shire – Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2008 – 2012
  - Narrabri Shire – Tourism Action Plan Update 2009

## Objectives

The aim of the retail review was to identify the key issues that will have an impact on the future development and marketing of the Wee Waa business district.

The review encompassed:

- ▶ Approaches to the CBD
- ▶ Main street
- ▶ Architecture and Streetscape
- ▶ Retail Mix
- ▶ Product Mix
- ▶ Signage
- ▶ Identity and branding
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Retail Skills
- ▶ Marketing Collateral
- ▶ Tourism potential

## Town Review

### Approaches

- ▶ Wee Waa is located 40 kilometres west of Narrabri on the Kamilaroi Highway which runs from Bourke to Quirindi
  - The Highway has been actively promoted as a touring route in recent years
- ▶ The town is well sign posted from Narrabri and easy to find
- ▶ The town approaches from the East are scenic through cotton growing and agricultural areas
- ▶ The alternate approach from Narrabri is also very attractive and brings visitors out onto Rose Street
- ▶ The approach from the West is much less attractive as it passes through the light industrial area which has a number of run down and vacant premises
- ▶ Wee Waa has distinctive gateway signs which are painted green with a black frame
  - The signs feature the wording “Welcome to Wee Waa. The oldest town on the Namoi”
  - The sign also features the Narrabri Shire logo
- ▶ On the Eastern approach to town is a well maintained Rotary Park

- The park features a Rotary welcome sign which is quite faded in places. The sign promotes Rotary and Lions Clubs, the dates for the next Wee Waa show, Golf Club and Vision FM
- Near the gateway signs is a tourism sign promoting a local wintery
- ▶ On the approach to the main street is the Namoi Echo Museum
  - This development has excellent signage and strong street appeal
  - This museum looks large enough and impressive enough to attract passing traffic
- ▶ There is a truck by-pass of the CBD so heavy traffic does not run through the main street
  - There are signs directing visitors to The Town Centre
- ▶ First impressions of the main street are very positive
- ▶ The main street is relatively short and most businesses can be seen from the main street.
  - However, it is not easy to identify individual businesses as you drive through the main street
- ▶ The town itself appears neat and tidy with wide, tree lined streets and well kept gardens

## Business Precincts

- ▶ There are two distinct business precincts in Wee Waa; the main street and Boolcarrol Road where there is a cluster of light industrial businesses

## Main Street

- ▶ The main street has a strong “village” feel due to the attractive streetscaping
- ▶ There is an impression of greenery which comes from the established tree plantings and garden adjacent to the clock tower intersection
- ▶ Businesses generally look well cared for and the CBD looks neat and orderly
- ▶ The main street is dominated by a large IGA supermarket and adjoining car park which looks to be a new development
- ▶ There is no graffiti or obvious signs of vandalism
- ▶ There is a positive ambience in the main street
  - To the first time visitor, Wee Waa is an attractive, bustling town with a strong feeling of community
  - During the site visit it was common to see people stopped chatting to each other in the main street
  - The locals all seem to know and greet each other

## Architecture

- ▶ Wee Waa main street consists mainly of modern architecture with a few stand out heritage buildings such as the Imperial Hotel and Court House
- ▶ The bakery in the main street also has an attractive heritage facade
- ▶ Most of the modern buildings are low and sympathetic to the streetscape
- ▶ The architectural mix is pulled together with the strong streetscaping elements

## Streetscape

- ▶ There is a real sense of “arrival” in the main street and the streetscaping enhances and adds character to the mainly modern buildings
- ▶ The Wee Waa streetscape creates a very strong and positive first impression
- ▶ In the main street there is a median strip planted with trees
- ▶ There are also roadside tree plantings with decorative tree guards
  - The tree guards are also planted with blooming climbers which will add seasonal colour to the main street

- ▶ Obviously a lot of time, money and energy have gone into creating a village like ambience. Streetscape features include
  - Decorative heritage style light poles
  - Decorative bollards and chains
  - Bench seating
  - Decorative paving
  - Rubbish bins
  - Two “shelters” with picnic table seating which seem to act as a hub for the community interaction
- ▶ Other stand out features of the main street are the War Memorial clock and the manicured gardens of Little House on Rose

## Retail Mix

- ▶ At first glance, the Wee Waa main street seems to be a typical town servicing the local community but closer inspection shows there are a number of interesting browsing businesses in the retail mix
- ▶ The day to day needs of the local community are well serviced by local businesses
  - It is expected that residents would travel to Narrabri or a larger centre for major purchases
- ▶ A review of the retail mix showed approximately 27 businesses in or adjacent to the main street and 18 located in Boolcarrol Road
- ▶ 7 of the Rose Street businesses primarily service the daily needs of the local community these include:
  - Pharmacy, newsagent, post office, baker, service station, hardware
  - There is one supermarket which also sells fresh produce including fruit and veg, meat, poultry and deli lines
  - The baker is the only other fresh food retailer in the main street
- ▶ Wee Waa has 2 hair and beauty businesses located in the main street
- ▶ There is one fashion outlet with a wide range of labels which are designed to appeal to a broad range of locals
- ▶ There are a surprising number of “browsing” outlets in Wee Waa.
  - There are 5 outlets which would have direct appeal to visitors including Little House on Rose, The Green Door, newsagency/gift shop, Post Office gifts, Image photography and Robbie’s Country Clothing
  - Since the initial site visit a new plant nursery and gift shop have opened
- ▶ There are 2 cafes in the main street and food is also available from the Bowling Club and Imperial Hotel
  - Evening meal choices are limited to the Bowling Club, Imperial Hotel, Royal Hotel and Wee Waa motel (by arrangement)
- ▶ Wee Waa has retained two banks which is excellent for a town of Wee Waa’s size
- ▶ The town also has professional services including 2 solicitors, a surveyor and an accountant
- ▶ Boolcarrol Road is home to a wide range of trade and rural service businesses
- ▶ At the time of the site visit there were 4 vacancies in the main street
- ▶ Wee Waa has a local hospital, medical centre and Centrelink offices
- ▶ Wee Waa is fortunate to have a number of destination businesses and services which attract people to the town. Apart from trade services in Boolcarrol Road destination businesses in the main street would include
  - Little House on Rose
  - Robbie’s Country Clothing
  - Anecdotal evidence suggests both these businesses attract shoppers from Narrabri

## Product Mix

- ▶ It is often easy to “read” the target markets of a retailer by looking at the stock they carry. There are a number of retail outlets in Wee Waa that obviously have a very clear picture of their target markets. Stock is arranged attractively and logically to appeal to their potential customers.
- ▶ Wee Waa businesses seem to be progressive and there is strong evidence that they are meeting local and visitor needs by filling any “gaps” in the mix by developing “two in concepts” e.g. toys and gifts in the newsagency, gifts in the Post Office, plants and furniture in Little House on Rose
  - It is very unusual to see so many outlets in a town adopting two in one concepts and indicates business owners who are willing to adapt to change
- ▶ Some of the stock in retail outlets tends to be traditional and conservative in nature and there appears to be an assumption that most customers are price shoppers.
  - There is also evidence of a higher spending market that is not particularly price sensitive
  - This may be an indication that the market is changing and there may be a call for more adventurous/upmarket products in the future
  - This can also be a result of a changing local population or an influx of tourists
- ▶ The supermarket appears to actively target the local market and is responsive to local needs which may help keep local dollars in town
  - The supermarket has changed hands since the site visit
- ▶ There is some duplication of stock and styles of stock in the browsing outlets. This can be due to
  - Retailers all purchasing from agents or travellers visiting the town
  - Retailers all purchasing at the same major gift fairs
  - Copying of stock by individual business owners
- ▶ This duplication can lead to the perception that there is nothing different or new in town

## Trading Hours

- ▶ The majority of businesses in Wee Waa trade for 5.5 days
- ▶ The supermarket, service station and Lochie’s Mini Mart are open seven days a week
- ▶ The photography retail outlet (After Image) is not open but there is a contact number for the photographer in the window of the store
- ▶ The Museum opens Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday

## Parking

- ▶ There is reverse parking in the main street along with a parking area next to the supermarket
- ▶ At the time of the site visit there was plenty of main street parking available
- ▶ There did not appear to be any dedicated parking for caravans or RV’s but they could easily park in the supermarket car park
  - This has been addressed since the site visit with new signs and a caravan/RV dump site

## Signage

- ▶ Building signage in Wee Waa is a little hit and miss with some excellent examples of professional signage and some businesses with little or no signage
- ▶ There is a lack of above awning signage in some areas of the main street which may be due to Council or property owner restrictions
  - The IGA, ANZ and Wee Waa Hardware all have very strong above awning signage

- ▶ A number of businesses in Wee Waa do not have awning signage.
  - Lack of awning signage can make it difficult for visitors and passing traffic to see what shops the Wee Waa retail mix has to offer
- ▶ A number of Wee Waa businesses have under awning signage which is very effective at pulling people along a main street
  - The bakery has a fun under awning sign in the shape of a loaf which adds character to the streetscape
- ▶ Relatively few businesses are using shopfront signage
- ▶ There is potential for individual businesses to increase the amount of signage and add colour and vibrancy to the main street
  - Image Photography and Robbie's Country clothing are great examples of coordinated signage with consistent signage used on awning, above awning and shop front
- ▶ There are also a couple of creative signs like the freestanding hanging signs used by Little House on Rose and JRM accounting
- ▶ A couple of businesses are also using A Boards to attract attention to their outlet; generally these are placed safely and used well to promote products and services
  - Little House on Rose uses flags and a chalkboard on a trolley to supplement their signage and increase their visibility
  - At the time of the site visit there was a quilt exhibition in the front of Little House on Rose which added to the colour in the main street
  - The Newsagency/gift shop is displaying stock on the pavement

## Retail Skills

- ▶ Stock display and layout is an area where Wee Waa outperforms many regional towns. It was an unexpected delight to note the overall quality of retail merchandising in a wide range of outlets.
  - Overall Wee Waa has the one of the neatest stock displays of any group of retail outlets I have seen. The supermarket had full shelves, well merchandised stock and clean, tidy surrounds, the fashion outlet was very well presented, gift shops featured creative displays of attractive stock and even the hardware store which traditionally is a difficult outlet to keep tidy had excellent in-store merchandising
- ▶ A small number of outlets did not present as well as others. Some of the areas of poor performance included
  - Windows cluttered with posters restricting the view into the outlet
  - Lack of signage or branding
  - Lack of stock in the window
  - Out of date or faded window displays
  - Little or no signage on professional offices
  - Stock not presented logically
  - Lack of directional signage
  - Poor lighting or lights turned off in window displays
- ▶ Customer service
  - It is difficult to judge customer service on a brief visit and in some communities locals are greeted enthusiastically whilst visitors are ignored. However, most staff in Wee Waa outlets were friendly and greetings were offered in most stores

## Identity and Branding

- ▶ Wee Waa does not appear to have its own brand except for the Gateway signage
- ▶ Wee Waa's market position "The oldest town in the Namoi" works well for the local community but does not have a "promise" or position the town or the business community with visitors

- ▶ The Wee Waa website [www.weewaa.com](http://www.weewaa.com) also uses a logo with the positioning statement "Australia's Cotton Capital"
- ▶ Wee Waa seems to be incorporated under the Narrabri Shire brand in most marketing material
- ▶ A Google web search for Wee Waa brought up [www.weewaa.com](http://www.weewaa.com) as the number one listing for both Australia only and web wide searches
  - Other sites on the first page of searches included Northern NSW, Sydney Morning Herald, Where Is, real estate sites and NSW schools
  - Interestingly, Narrabri Shire and Narrabri Tourism sites did not appear on the first page of these searches
- ▶ A Google web search for accommodation brought up Google Map listings for all accommodation providers which is excellent
  - [www.weewaa.com](http://www.weewaa.com) was the first listing on this search
  - Again, Narrabri Shire and Narrabri Tourism sites did not appear on the first page of these searches
  - There may be potential to upgrade Search Engine Optimisation on these sites to improve the ranking for Wee Waa
- ▶ A Google Search for Wee Waa Chamber of Commerce brought up [www.weewaa.com](http://www.weewaa.com) with the Narrabri Shire site as second listing on this search
- ▶ The Namoi Echo Museum does not appear to have its own website but a search brings up [www.weewaa.com.au](http://www.weewaa.com.au) on the first page of listings and [www.visitnarrabri.com.au](http://www.visitnarrabri.com.au) on the second page of listings

## Marketing Collateral

- ▶ The Wee Waa website is a key element in marketing the town and works at several levels. It is comprehensive and up to date providing information on everything from local businesses, community groups and direct sellers of products like Avon to tourism information and local news for residents, potential and new residents, visitors and local businesses
  - It is also the home website for the Wee Waa Chamber
- ▶ Wee Waa is also promoted on the tourism website [www.visitnarrabri.com.au](http://www.visitnarrabri.com.au)
- ▶ The town is also profiled on the Narrabri Shire Council website under "explore our towns and villages"
- ▶ Wee Waa has recently published a full colour A5 community guide (similar to the one produced for Boggabri). This guide would also have appeal for the tourist market Other Wee Waa specific marketing material includes
  - An A4 quality black and white brochure for the Wee Waa Historical Walk
  - Full colour DL sized leaflet for The Namoi Echo Museum
- ▶ Wee Waa is also included in a wide range of Narrabri marketing material including
  - An A3 Shire Township map which also includes Narrabri and Boggabri
  - Narrabri Shire tourism guide
  - Narrabri Shire Products and Services Guide
  - Narrabri Shire Business and Residents Guide
  - Narrabri Shire Community Directory
  - Narrabri Shire Eateries Guide
  - Narrabri Accommodation Guide
  - Bird Routes of The Western Namoi Floodplains
- ▶ The town is indirectly mentioned on
  - Kamilaroi Highway map
  - Discover Warrumbungle postcard
  - Big Sky Country map

## Tourism

- ▶ Wee Waa is actively promoted through Narrabri tourism and is included in a wide range of marketing material including itineraries designed to keep visitors in the area and “relay” them from town to town
- ▶ There is no dedicated VIC in Wee Waa but a number of organisations and businesses including The Namoi Echo Museum, Caltex Service Station and Little House on Rose distribute marketing material
- ▶ There is limited accommodation in Wee Waa so it is unlikely to become a tourism “destination” in the short to medium term
  - In the short term there is probably more potential for local operators to target contractors and short term visitors as core markets
- ▶ The growing interest in the Kamilaroi Highway will increase the number of RV’s on the route which will be an opportunity for local caravan parks
  - The towns newly acquired RV Friendly status will also increase the towns appeal for caravans and RV’s
- ▶ There are also limited options for evening dining which will affect longer stay visitors
- ▶ The Namoi Echo Museum is a strong tourist attraction for Wee Waa but it is not open 7 days a week.
- ▶ Other traditional tourist attractions include
  - The Wee Waa Historical Walk
  - Seplin Estate Wines
  - Cuttabri Wine Shack
- ▶ Anecdotal evidence suggests that Wee Waa’s retail mix of browsing outlets is also a tourist attraction and there is potential to promote this and increase the visitation to Wee Waa by locals from surrounding areas
- ▶ The photos featured in After Image Photography would have strong appeal for the visitor market
  - This retail outlet is not open but there is a contact number for the photographer in the window of the store

# Wee Waa Focus Group

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A meeting of local business owners was held on Thursday September 17th, 2009 from 5.30 pm – 7.30 pm. Participants were selected business owners from the area including retailers and service businesses.

This was an opportunity for local business operators to have their say about the marketing of the area. They also provided valuable insights into the profile of locals and visitors to the area. This session helped identify the issues that need to be addressed before marketing can begin.

The group was asked a series of questions in relation to Wee Waa. Responses to questions and issues are detailed below. **Please note that these are the opinions of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the consultant.**

How would you describe your local market?

- ▶ Wee Waa is a workers town
  - People who live here work mainly in agriculture
  - The traditional business around here is cotton farming
- ▶ There are 1620 residents in Wee Waa
- ▶ The population is falling
  - Farms have downsized
  - Technology has reduced the need for itinerant workers
- ▶ There is an ageing population with a high number of fixed income retirees
- ▶ There are a large number of people on welfare
- ▶ There are a number of working mothers
  - The demand for long day care is increasing
- ▶ There is a local indigenous population
  - Approximately 22% of the population
- ▶ There has been a recent real estate boom with strong growth in the last two years
- ▶ The area is very popular with first home buyers aged between 20 and 30
- ▶ There are young people moving into town
  - Often work in coal and gas industries
  - Like to live on acreage
- ▶ There is a high level of business ownership, especially amongst women
- ▶ There is potential to promote Wee Waa as a dormitory town for workers in local industries
- ▶ There is a part time population that live in Wee Waa for short periods of time e.g.
  - Staff at the hospital
  - Contractors

How would you describe your visitor market?

- ▶ A lot of employees travel to Wee Waa to work
  - Many of these people live in Narrabri
- ▶ Workers from out of town heading to
  - Namoi Cotton
  - Cotton Grow Service
  - Cotton Seed Distributors
  - Boolcarrol Road businesses
  - Often these visitors are in town very early in the morning

- ▶ Students and teachers at high school and primary school
- ▶ Shoppers from Narrabri
- ▶ Walgett residents
- ▶ People from surrounding villages of Burran Junction, Pilliga and Gwabegar
- ▶ Truck drivers servicing local businesses

### Do you see tourists in Wee Waa? Who are they?

- ▶ Wee Waa is seeing more tourists in town
- ▶ Caravanners
  - Both Grey Nomads and Wanderers
  - The town is RV Friendly with parking and dump point
- ▶ RV drivers, particularly in winter
- ▶ People travelling key tourist routes in the area e.g.
  - Kamilaroi Highway
  - Darling River Run
  - On their way to or from Lightning Ridge
- ▶ People visiting the area attracted by the artesian bore baths
- ▶ The area is very popular with birdwatchers and fishing clubs
- ▶ People on car rallies
- ▶ People staying in Narrabri will often visit Wee Waa
- ▶ People attending events such as
  - Back to Wee Waa (biannual event)
  - Open Garden Weekend
  - Rugby League, Soccer and sporting events
- ▶ People visiting friends and relatives e.g. over Easter
- ▶ Wee Waa also attracts agricultural tourists

### What do you think are the “gaps” in the Wee Waa business mix?

- ▶ Butchers shop
- ▶ Dentist
- ▶ Lack of 7 day trading
  - The supermarket, service station and café operate at weekends
  - The rest of town only trades 5.5 days
- ▶ It would be great to have artesian bore baths in town
- ▶ More care beds in the health care

### What attracts people to Wee Waa?

- ▶ Better quality roads are making it easier to get to Wee Waa
  - ▶ The shopping, people come from Walgett and Rowena
- ▶ It is quicker to go via Wee Waa than heading back to the highway
- ▶ An attractive streetscape with bull nose verandas
- ▶ The affordability of real estate
- ▶ It’s a “can do” community where everyone contributes and commits
- ▶ If we haven’t got it we build it
- ▶ The town has a number of destination businesses which “pull” people into town
- ▶ The museum
- ▶ The garden in the main street
  - It is a place for local events and activities such as the Quilt Show
- ▶ The town has an active garden club
- ▶ Yarrie Lake (currently dry)

# Key Issues & Opportunities

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Wee Waa has a great track record as a “can do” town and the local community have been very proactive at developing facilities and sourcing funding for community projects.

The 2007 Wee Waa Strategic Plan identified that Marketing and Tourism, Business Development and Youth projects were key themes for future initiatives. The Wee Waa Chamber of Commerce have embraced this town approach and their recent support has helped the town achieve its goal of a skate park for Wee Waa.

In terms of Business Development, Marketing and Tourism, there is significant potential for the Chamber to take a leadership role and capitalise on opportunities in the marketplace to maximise revenue from both the local and visitor markets.

The 2007 strategic plan has already identified top ten “actions”. A number of initiatives have already been implemented but those most relevant to the Business Community Plan are 2.2c “Develop specific actions to attract boutique businesses to Wee Waa” and 1.4b “Promote cooperative marketing amongst local businesses”.

In addition to the actions there are also a number of strategies mooted in the planning document that are still relevant in the current environment. Where possible, these have been expanded upon in this Business Community Plan. These include

- ▶ Developing and promoting an annual Wee Waa event
- ▶ Creating consistent branding for the business community
- ▶ Attracting new businesses to Wee Waa

Obviously the marketplace has changed since the 2007 planning project, but based on the site visit, focus group and interviews with a number of Chamber members the following key issues and opportunities have been identified:

## Maintaining local spending and capitalising on existing local markets

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the population of Wee Waa and surrounding areas is undergoing a change with industry attracting new residents. It is important that Wee Waa businesses work together to promote their businesses and products to increase visitation and average spend by existing locals. Retail vacancies also means there is potential for the Wee Waa Chamber to work with real estate agents to improve and build on the retail mix so it continues to appeal to the local market.

## Creating a strong image and brand

The town positioning and brand as The Namoi’s Oldest Town does not offer any benefits (in terms of marketing) to attract residents, shoppers or tourists. There is potential for the Chamber and business community to create a brand that positions Wee Waa in relation to surrounding business districts. This would not overshadow the town branding but add another dimension for marketing the towns’ business community.

## Capitalising on the browsing mix

The strong range of browsing businesses in the Wee Waa main street is an opportunity for the broader business community. There is potential to promote these businesses specifically and then cross promote the rest of the browsing mix and other main street businesses to the customers they attract.

Encouraging more browsing outlets to town will also increase Wee Waa’s appeal as a destination for surrounding areas. This is most likely to appeal to recreational shoppers (often women) who will spend half a day browsing and enjoying lunch or afternoon tea in local cafes.

## Capitalising on the “honorary locals”

Wee Waa has a potential target market in the employees who travel to Wee Waa for work along with the contractors who spend periods of time in the area. In smaller communities every dollar counts and marketing programs to encourage employees, contractors and retail staff to spend their money where they work can have a significant impact.

## Capitalising on Narrabri Shire tourism initiatives

The Narrabri Shire has a clear and comprehensive tourism strategy which is designed to increase visitation for all towns in the Shire including Wee Waa. Although local perception may be that much of the marketing material is Narrabri centric it should be noted that initiatives such as “day in” itineraries, accommodation guides, eating guides and the Bird Routes map are all designed to increase traffic to surrounding towns. There is significant potential for the Wee Waa business community to piggyback shire initiatives and encourage more visitors to stop and spend time and money in Wee Waa.

## Consolidating the “offer” for the tourism market

The growing popularity of the Narrabri Shire and Kamilaroi Highway touring route will see more tourists travelling through Wee Waa but the towns proximity to Narrabri may mean that travellers heading east could plan to break their journey in Narrabri rather than Wee Waa.

To encourage more people to stop in town there is potential to add more colour to the main street and increase awareness of the browsing shops and cafes in the main street. Wee Waa can also actively promote their RV Friendly status which will certainly encourage caravanners to stop in the township.

In the longer term there is also potential to attract more destination visitors by increasing trading hours for some businesses and improving the accommodation and evening meal offerings.

## Implementing ideas and concepts

Although the Wee Waa Chamber is very active, like most small Chambers of Commerce it is limited by funds, number of members and time available to implement initiatives. Revitalising the image of the Chamber with a campaign name may encourage new people to join and existing members to take a more active role in the Chamber. It will be important to ensure that the introduction of new initiatives is staged or staggered so it does not cause burnout for the most active members of the group. It may also be possible to source funding for a part time coordinator who can assist with planning and implementation of initiatives.

# Target Markets

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Target Markets for the Wee Waa business community include:

Locals

Existing residents

Residents from surrounding towns

New residents

Recreational shoppers

Destination visitors

Tourists

People visiting friends and relatives

Workers and contractors

# Consolidation

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There are usually two phases to marketing a business community. The initial phase is to consolidate the offering to the target markets and decide on the market positioning and develop any necessary marketing collateral. Once a direction has been established, the business community can then actively promote to its target markets.

## Image and brand for the Wee Waa Chamber

Unlike many Chambers of Commerce that focus only on the business community, the Wee Waa Chamber supports and implements both community and business initiatives

The Chamber may find it easier to motivate local businesses and encourage participation in Chamber initiatives by creating a separate identity and developing a campaign name specifically for its business development activities.

Creating a name to encompass Chamber business focused activities will also build the Chamber profile amongst the local community and position the group as innovative, progressive “champions” for the business community.

Developing a logo to go with the campaign will create a focus and give the Chamber a visual representation which can be used by the town, chamber and individual businesses.

A number of regional Chambers or Councils have adopted this approach and some of their campaign names include:

- ▶ Lismore Unlimited
- ▶ Growing Inverell
- ▶ Nambour Futures
- ▶ Coffs Streets Ahead
- ▶ Karuah Working Together
- ▶ Lifestyle Dookie
- ▶ Woodburn – stop, shop, play

The slogan (or positioning statement) and logo can be actively promoted on:

- ▶ The weewaa.com website
- ▶ Main street flags
- ▶ Individual retail outlets – flags window strips or decals
- ▶ New marketing material such as “Day in flyers”
- ▶ Gateway signs (perhaps as a Gateway signage during major promotions)
- ▶ Dedicated pages on Council or tourism websites

In addition to creating a “campaign” name for marketing to local businesses there may also be an opportunity to increase numbers at Chamber meetings by introducing social elements to meetings. Some smaller towns run monthly events such as “Business after Five” or “Business before Seven” where a different business hosts and provides food and drink for an informal after work or breakfast meeting at their premises. This concept has the added benefit of giving business owners a chance to find out more about some of the products and services offered in the town.

## Online Visibility

### Search Engine Optimisation

The local site [www.weewaa.com](http://www.weewaa.com) has excellent visibility on all searches for Wee Waa but the business community would benefit from stronger online visibility through [www.visitnarrabri.com.au](http://www.visitnarrabri.com.au) and [www.narrabri.nsw.gov.au](http://www.narrabri.nsw.gov.au). Although Wee Waa features in content on both sites they are not appearing on searches. This is most likely due to a lack of Search Engine Optimisation for Wee Waa on these sites and if that is the case it would not be difficult to improve. There may also be potential to link to the

WeeWaa.com site from the Narrabri site as there does not appear to any Wee Waa specific information on the council website.

## Local Website

[www.weewaa.com](http://www.weewaa.com) is a very comprehensive site and provides excellent information for both locals and tourists. It performs well in its current state but if the webmaster is considering adding new categories and material these could include:

- ▶ Increasing the amount of information under the business directory listings.
  - Usually in a business directory a listing would include 25 – 100 word description of services offered, business owners name, trading hours and contact details including street address. As this is a privately owned site it would be expected that a small fee would be charged for the listing. Optional extras might include a photo of their premises (or staff) and a link to their website
  - Local businesses can also be encouraged to increase their support the site with advertising as a number of the paid advertisers on the site are currently Narrabri businesses
- ▶ There may also be potential to add a menu tab for business opportunities where the Chamber can cross promote vacancies and “gaps” in the retail mix. (This could possibly be linked to the Chambers pages on the website)
- ▶ There is also potential to add specific information about the “browsing” businesses in Wee Waa
- ▶ Although there are photographs included on the site there may be potential to add more photographs to increase the impact of the site. There are a number of opportunities
  - Photos could possibly be supplied by the local photographer from After Image Photography as a way of promoting her work
  - Through the Narrabri Shire snapshot competition which is being held in the New Year
  - Alternatively Wee Waa could hold its own competition inviting locals to capture their “vision” of Wee Waa. Typically this would be a one day activity which everyone from school children to keen amateurs could participate in. Finalists in this competition could be displayed in retail windows or used to dress up the vacant shop events and activities
  - This could be coordinated and promoted by the Wee Waa Chamber
  - One small town who took this approach ended up with so many great photos they produced a town calendar and postcards which they sell in local retail outlets. They now run the competition as an annual event.

## Chamber Pages

The Chamber web pages provide good quality information for the business community However, some of the information is currently out of date. The Chamber pages would also benefit from

- ▶ More detailed information about events e.g. Business Awards
- ▶ More photos of events and activities
- ▶ Inclusion of a “welcome kit” for business owners

## Retail Mix

Wee Waa is generally well serviced for day-to-day needs and there are no major gaps in the retail mix. There is also a wide range of agricultural service businesses and an unexpected number of browsing outlets considering the size of the town. The town operates very well as a service centre but it would be expected that there is a significant amount of escape spending to Narrabri and Tamworth.

In terms of day to day needs, the only gaps identified in the focus group were a butchers shop and a dentist and as there are several vacancies in the main street it may be possible to attract a butcher to Wee Waa. However, it should be noted that as the supermarket already stocks meat there may not be the population to support another butcher outlet. The dentist may be more likely to be a part time visitor initially or could be interested in space in one of the medical practices.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Wee Waa's mix of browsing outlets and cafes already attracts recreational shoppers from Narrabri and surrounding areas and as there are four vacancies in the main street at present there may be potential to build the retail mix to appeal to this target market.

It is now recognised that shoppers differentiate between day to day and recreational shopping. For day to day shopping, most people head for a mall or shopping strip with a large supermarket and a range of specialty stores (in metro areas these are often known chain outlets) and usually have a set period of time to purchase everything on their list. Here they become creatures of habit; parking in the same area, following the same route through the supermarket and visiting fresh food and specialty outlets in a certain order. If shoppers stop to have a coffee or a snack they often visit the same café on a regular basis. Day to day shopping is all about familiarity and routine.

On the other hand, recreational shopping is all about "new and different". Although shoppers visit the area less often, they have usually budgeted to indulge themselves and spend on wants rather than needs. They are looking for independent retailers, a range of outlets, interesting stock and most importantly a range of eating options because lunch or coffee is an important part of the experience.

Recreational shoppers often travel in pairs or groups e.g. young mums catching up for coffee or mother and daughter outings or women meeting up for a retail therapy session. Towns that target recreational shoppers report that multiple purchases and high average spend are common amongst this segment as friends tend to encourage each other to purchase.

Building Wee Waa's mix of browsing and café outlets will also increase the towns appeal to tourism visitors.

## Building the retail mix

The fact that there are a number of retail vacancies in Wee Waa means that there are significant opportunities to proactively add to the retail mix in the short to medium term. It is important to note that the success of this strategy will rely on attracting businesses that complement but do not compete with the existing mix. For instance, attracting another fashion outlet that carries different brands and looks and feels different to Robbie's Country Clothing rather than a "me too" operator.

The Wee Waa Chamber can play a key role by developing a retail mix "wish list" and working with local real estate and stock and station agents to develop a strategy for improving the retail mix. This approach would involve:

- ▶ Setting up a sub-committee to develop a hit list of businesses that would be appropriate for Wee Waa. This might include:
  - Fashion accessories
  - Café/deli
  - Homewares and books
- ▶ Reviewing main street vacancies to identify properties available
- ▶ Contacting property owners and real estate agents to see if they would agree to proactive marketing of their property
- ▶ Working with real estate agents to identify appropriate or preferred use for premises. This is critical for cafes or fast food outlets
  - Work with Real Estate agents to develop property profiles for each vacancy detailing Chamber recommendations for usage

- These profiles could also be available as PDF's or "slide shows" on the real estate website

This approach has the added benefit of giving potential owners or tenant's confidence that they are meeting a need in the town and will have the support of other businesses.

## Marketing retail opportunities

It is important to note that many new businesses already have a "link" with the community they relocate to. They could be partners of people relocated to the area for work, have family members in the area, be on holidays in the region or just happen to visit the town. For this reason it is important to promote the fact that the area is looking for new businesses in as many areas as possible. Tactics might include:

- ▶ Developing a retail (or business) opportunities category for the Wee Waa website
- ▶ Developing a "prospectus" page for the website
  - Promoting the prospectus in local press or publications that are sent to local residents e.g. rate notices
  - Placing card sized advertisements from the Chamber in real estate agents windows locally and in surrounding areas
  - Using signs in the windows of vacant shops to identify possible usages

There may also be an opportunity for the Chamber to actively source new businesses. This would involve:

- ▶ Approaching retailers in other regional communities who may wish to open a second store in Wee Waa e.g. two members of a Chamber from a town on the South Coast of Victoria went on a 2 day road trip to find a café that would fit their existing mix and then approached owners to see if they were interested in opening a second outlet
- ▶ Actively marketing to business owners in specific areas of regional and metropolitan NSW and Queensland through advertising or publicity in local papers e.g. a town on the Central Coast of NSW advertised in the fast growing suburbs of western Sydney for deli operators and gift shop retailers who were looking for a "sea change".

## Product Mix

### General

In the short term, product gaps are primarily opportunities for existing retailers who would like to expand their product range. Wee Waa businesses already have a strong track record for introducing "two in one" shop concepts and this trend should continue.

Examples of this concept working in other communities include:

- ▶ Hairdressing and craft/gifts
- ▶ Sweetshop and coffee shop
- ▶ Hardware and appliance retail
- ▶ Homewares and cooking utensils plus coffee shop
- ▶ Beauty salon and chocolates/sweets
- ▶ Health food and delicatessen
- ▶ Fabric shop and shoe store
- ▶ Coffee shop and bookstore
- ▶ Newsagency and toys
- ▶ Plant nursery/gifts/café
- ▶ Trophy store/ key cutting/engraving/gifts
- ▶ Trophy store/sporting goods

The lack of evening meal options may also be an opportunity for the supermarket, bakery and café to explore the potential to provide ready made meals. For example, in a community of a similar size, the local café sells dinner packs of home made lasagne and salad or curry and rice to local contractors and time poor locals.

In another town in regional Victoria, local farmers took over the task of feeding tourists and promoted "Dining on the farm" where visitors joined a local family for a home cooked feast for \$25 a head. This was an added boost for farmers who were suffering from the drought at that stage.

If local business owners decide to introduce new products they should research product demand with existing or potential customers. This can be done informally by chatting to regulars or more formally with questionnaires or a "focus group" discussion with target customers.

Local businesses could also discuss these opportunities at the monthly Chamber meeting.

Any new products/concepts should be tested for a minimum of three months. It should be noted that creative merchandising and display of higher priced or boutique products is critical and they should be grouped together rather than mixed in with standard fare. In-store promotion such as sampling will also help increase awareness of the new lines.

To maintain local spending, retailers should not attempt to compete solely on price but promote quality, product knowledge and customer service.

A shopping basket survey (see Appendix) often demonstrates that local prices are more competitive than local customers have assumed. In some cases prices can be the same or even lower than larger centres. Positive results of this research can be promoted in the local paper for maximum impact.

Local businesses can build loyalty with the local market by:

- ▶ Tailoring their opening hours to meet the needs of the local community. Some businesses may be able to adapt their hours to meet the needs of commuters to Narrabri and other towns. For instance, a butcher in a similar community encourages local residents to fax or email their order and he has it ready for pick up when they return to town, this means closing 30 minutes later
- ▶ Researching products that customers would prefer to buy locally and tailor their product ranges to suit, this is particularly important for fresh foods and perishables, which many people prefer to purchase locally
  - One regional supermarket introduced a suggestion board where shoppers could fill out special requests and the retailer then responds to their request
- ▶ Improving customer service so there is a loyalty that holds the shopper to the local area. It appears that the level of customer service in Wee Waa is already high but there may be opportunities for new initiatives such as wish list boards, loyalty cards or promotions.
  - One regional community encourages residents with weekenders and small properties in the area to spend their money in town. It was noticed that many weekenders who travelled to the town on Friday night were stocking up with groceries at a major centre on the way. The local supermarket encouraged these residents to email or fax in their supermarket orders, which are left at one of the local pubs for collection
  - This strategy had the added advantage of introducing the weekenders to locals at the pub

It is also important to note that cafés and food outlets play an important role in building local loyalty. Good coffee, interesting food and pleasant environments lead to "word of mouth" referrals which encourage locals to eat in town or meet friends in town and then go shopping to support other retailers. Local retail staff also respond well to informal bonuses like delivery of coffee during quiet times or being able to bring in their own mug for a fill up.

Some cafes build local loyalty by targeting specific groups in the community; some examples include: Coffee club for young mums (or retirees) offering a coffee and cake special between 9.30am and 11am, Frequent Flyer bonuses for regulars e.g. buy five cups of coffee get one free or seniors specials and coffee club.

## Trading Hours

One of the key issues for the growing tourist market will be lack of weekend trading, particularly amongst café's and browsing outlets. Currently there are not enough cafes and browsing shops open to hold the visitor market on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday. Seplins, the local winery is open seven days but the museum which is a major tourist attraction for the town currently trades four days a week and is open on Saturday but not Sunday which is also an issue for the visitor market. The lack of evening dining options will also be an issue for the visitor market.

It is disappointing for visitors to arrive in a town and find there is nowhere to eat or only some of the browsing outlets are open. However, it must be recognised that it is a challenge for individual operators to trade seven days in a small community and maintaining a profitable business is of primary concern.

In the short term, the business community and tourist attractions should try and work together to standardise opening days and hours. For instance, in some communities tourism based businesses close on Mondays, in others there is a roster or agreed timetable for food outlets so that there is always somewhere open. In some towns there are different summer and winter hours e.g. a beachside town may trade 5.5 days in winter and 7 days in peak times.

In the longer term it is likely that as the popularity of Wee Waa grows and attracts weekend visitors, more browsing shops and food outlets will be able to sustain seven day trading and business owners will be able to employ local staff so they don't have to be on duty seven days a week.

It is usually best trialled with a group of "volunteers" which would include tourist and retail businesses. Initially weekend trading could be trialled during peak times such as winter and spring. It is important that all participating businesses agree on a starting date and give the trial at least three months before declaring it a success or failure.

It may not be possible to get agreement on seven day trading immediately and you may need to extend hours gradually starting with extended Saturday hours or Sunday morning trading to attract the leisure/brunch/Sunday drive market.

The businesses most likely to benefit from weekend trading will be the food outlets and browsing shops

- ▶ Opening hours for each participating business including tourism operators should be decided upon and "published" in the local paper and Chamber website or with a one-colour or inexpensive flyer which can be letterbox dropped to local postcodes
- ▶ This brochure can also be distributed to Visitor Information Centres and accommodation providers in target areas such as Narrabri
- ▶ Individual businesses should be encouraged to have their opening hours clearly visible. This is particularly relevant for food outlets.

## Streetscape

Wee Waa already has excellent street appeal but there is potential to increase promotion of main street retailers and encourage more visitors to stop. Initiatives could include:

- ▶ Adding more colour to the main street to tie together the range of businesses.
- ▶ Flags are a relatively inexpensive way of strengthening the image and branding of Wee Waa. These "standards" could be attached to existing poles in the main street. A series of flags could be used to promote all aspects of the town. Themes could include:
  - Chamber of commerce
  - Browsing mix

- Cotton and primary industry
- Cafes
- Historical Walk
- Local community events
- Art Gallery
- ▶ These flags could be supplemented or replaced with flags promoting key festivals and Chamber promotions during the year
- ▶ There is also potential to produce mini versions of the flags to create more impact under the awnings.
  - These flags could be made available for local businesses who want to show their support for the area. (These look something like the Lotto flags outside newsagencies and are placed near doorways)
- ▶ Window strips or stickers that tie in to the new branding would also create strong visibility at shop level.
  - Window strips run across the top and bottom of shop windows and create a “frame” for merchandise.
  - This would be an ideal way of adding Chamber branding to retail outlets
  - These could be also developed as a part of a retail promotion or provided at cost to interested retailers.
- ▶ Local retailers already use A boards in the main street and there may be potential to add Chamber branding to existing boards using stickers
- ▶ Alternatively, A Boards could become an even stronger feature of the main street with retailers participating in a community arts or school project to design A Board shells or templates for the retail community.
  - A boards can also be used to promote special events like a shop local campaign and decorated with balloons during retail promotions
- ▶ There is also potential to improve the look of vacant businesses in the short term. Depending on the owner or agents it may be possible to use the windows to promote the town, community events, retail events or upcoming festivals. Initiatives could include:
  - Local school art project based on “our town” or history of the town
  - Display of local artists work with a local theme
  - Cross promotion of the Chamber and businesses in the main street
  - Photographic display

## Signage

There is a lack of under awning signage and poor above awning signage in some areas and it is difficult for people passing through to see what a great mix of retail outlets are in Wee Waa. The signage needs a “designer make-over” to increase its appeal to local visitors. This will require some negotiating and discussion with building owners and business owners but a few basic changes will have a major impact.

- ▶ Conduct a “snapshot” audit of all main street signs and retailer signs to identify
  - Redundant signs e.g. businesses no longer operating, road signs, old parking signs
  - Signs that cannot be read clearly from the road because they are too small or too cluttered
  - Handwritten signs
  - Lack of signage under the awning
  - Signs that are misleading
  - Signs that can’t be seen because they are blocked by other signs or foliage
  - Optimum positions for any new or replacement signs
- ▶ Remove or replace unsightly signs
  - Negotiate with building owners to remove or paint over redundant signs
  - Negotiate with council to remove any redundant signs

- Repaint handwritten or cluttered signs so they will be more effective for the business
- Reposition signs that can't be seen
- ▶ Identify which businesses would benefit from under awning or front of awning signage
- ▶ Shop front signage and front of awning signage which faces out onto the street is important for promoting the mix of retail outlets in the town.
  - In some communities retailers who can't utilise front of awning signage have overcome this with hanging signs at the front of the awning facing the street or coloured flags or pennants which attract the attention of passing traffic

Realistically this will be a difficult recommendation to implement or enforce, but a letter to the relevant businesses explaining the reasons behind this strategy may encourage some business owners to comply

In some communities these type of streetscape initiatives have been funded with a dollar for dollar subsidy e.g. \$500 for each business to upgrade signage, repaint shop front or introduce an A Board. Offices or commercial businesses that already have or don't need signage could use this subsidy to upgrade windows or beautify their building e.g. add awnings to soften a harsh exterior.

## Window Displays

Window displays also have an impact on passing traffic and convince people to stop and spend time in Wee Waa.

- ▶ At an individual shop level, improved window displays would enhance the image of the area and increase revenue for individual businesses.
- ▶ I would recommend a practical seminar for local retailers with additional in-store advice for interested outlets. This seminar could be followed with a window display competition, which will provide some fun and allow participants to show off their newly learned skills. Additional mileage would be gained from running a children's competition where children gather clues to a puzzle from the window displays
  - It may also be possible to involve local Tafe students studying design or retailing to practise their skills with a project in Wee Waa. This gives local retailers some inspiration and identifies potential visual merchandisers for ongoing projects.

Another area that could be improved is in-store signage and display. In some outlets stock was not laid out logically and there was a lack of directional signage. This is a topic which could also be addressed in a display and merchandising workshop.

## Marketing Collateral

Wee Waa already has an excellent range of marketing collateral produced through Narrabri Tourism. These publications along with the new community guide and local website are very effective marketing tools.

The main opportunity for the business community is to produce low cost marketing material designed to extend the length of stay of visitors and drive traffic from destination businesses to other businesses in the main street.

Similar to the "itineraries" featured in the Narrabri Shire Guide, "Day In" flyers are an easy concept that links together retail, food and tourism activities. These leaflets provide suggested itineraries designed to keep people in town longer. They tend to be "chatty" rather than a list of items e.g. Call in and say hi to the team at Little House on Rose and make sure you ask about their xxxx. Feeling peckish? Tuck in to XXXX at Rose Café. Depending on the target market these could promote different attractions e.g.

- ▶ Browsing Shops
  - "While You Are Here" or "Shop till You Drop in Wee Waa" promoting the range of browsing shops in Wee Waa. Each shop should be promoted along

with their specialty e.g. Check out XXX at XXX. This could also promote activities for husbands or partners of shoppers e.g. Love Your footy? You'll love the range of souvenirs at the Australia Post Shop

- ▶ Destination Businesses
  - While You are Here" or "Stop for coffee" promoting food outlets in the main street
- ▶ Locals
  - Another set of "day in" leaflets could be produced for the local VFR (visiting friends and relatives) market. These have the added advantage of building local pride and reminding locals of attractions in the area. These would be similar to the tourist leaflets but relevant to locals e.g. School holiday fun in your own backyard
- ▶ Tourists can also be targeted with "Day In" leaflets cross promoting activities and sharing some of the local secrets e.g.
  - Breakfast in a café
  - A visit to the Museum
  - Browsing shops
  - Visit the locals favourite fishing spot
  - Sunset wine tasting
  - Bird watching
  - Explore the unique habitat of the lagoon
- ▶ Other marketing material detailed in the plan includes
  - New Business Prospectus
  - Trading Hours flyer

## Event

It has been identified in previous planning exercises that Wee Waa would like to run an annual event which would attract visitors from outside the local area. This would be an excellent initiative for Wee Waa as it would create awareness of the town and encourage visitors.

However, the success of events usually depends on an appropriate theme which is logical for the area and a focal point for the event which will attract visitors. For example Merriwa's Festival of the Fleeces celebrates the towns farming history and attracts visitors with the running of the flock through the main street where the sheep wear red socks! They also stage an event where teams of 8 compete to shear the sheep, spin the wool and knit a jumper from the wool.

Possible themes already mooted for Wee Waa include Mud trial, Air Show, Lawn Mower race or cotton focused event. There may also be potential to build on an existing event such as the Garden Show which may be easier if an infrastructure is already in place. Events such as a lawn mower race could possibly be incorporated into the Garden Festival.

It would be expected that any event will take several years to build up a following and the key issue will be whether the Chamber has the resources to develop and stage a major event. It is recommended that organisers seek advice from other small communities who have successfully developed events. (Kurri Kurri would be a good example).

If this was to be coordinated by the local Chamber there may be potential to fund a part time coordinator through DSRD funding.

# Marketing Strategies

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The following strategies have been developed based on the Retail Review and key issues facing the Wee Waa business community. They have not been prioritised and some will not be appropriate if others are adopted, for example, if a Shop Local campaign is adopted, quarterly events would not be necessary. Some initiatives may be precluded in the short to medium term because of insufficient time or funds required, however they have been included to give the Chamber an overall view of possible strategies and options.

## Local Residents

The majority of locals will visit Wee Waa main street on a regular basis and will be well aware of products and services in the town. Most will also shop at Narrabri and larger centres such as Tamworth for major purchases. It would be unrealistic to expect locals to shop locally all the time but there is potential to encourage them to try local first, before heading out of town.

## Shop Local Campaign

Wee Waa has previously run a Shop Local campaign in the lead up to Christmas which is ideal as they are best held during peak or shoulder retail times. To keep these promotions fresh you can look at different styles of promotion; these include:

### Shop Local First

This simple concept runs three times a year. For every \$5 customers spend they receive a ticket for a prize draw. The prize can be tailored to suit the needs of the community but can range from a donated holiday to cash prizes, which would typically be first prize \$500 - \$1,000 and second prize \$200 - \$500. At peak times like Christmas a large number of smaller cash prizes can be offered. Although effective, this promotion has a major disadvantage in that there is no guarantee the cash prizes will be spent in town.

### Shopper Dollars Concept

Over a period of 2 - 3 months every purchase in Wee Waa earns Shopper Dollars. Typically you would earn 10% or \$1 for every \$10 you spend.

These dollars can then be used to bid at an auction for goods and services provided by local businesses. These auction goods should include one major prize, which will provide the incentive to attend the auction. A local auctioneer or celebrity can be invited to run the auction

- ▶ This promotion can be an ongoing campaign run once or twice a year
- ▶ Timing should be tied in with optimum trading times or as a lead up to an event such as the Wee Waa Show or Christmas Mardi Gras
- ▶ Promotion of the event can include:
  - Window banners in each retail outlet
  - Street banners
  - Window display competition
- ▶ The auction can also be the central focus of an existing festival or tie in with a major sales period.

In a town like Wee Waa where there is a strong community focus the Chamber can maximise the impact of the promotion by incorporating a community service angle where a percentage of the dollars raised go towards funding a program that will help a local group.

## Frequent Flyer Concept

The Chamber can also encourage individual retailers to run their own Frequent Shopper promotions by supplying a Wee Waa Frequent Shopper Card and poster, which can be overprinted for each business. This will allow individual retailers to participate in their own way while giving a Wee Waa identity to the promotion.

## Quarterly Events

Frequent, smaller retail promotions are also an effective way of keeping locals interested and active in the main street. As the Wee Waa business community have run very few joint promotions a simple way of building awareness is through quarterly events where all retail outlets theme their stores and run "in store" promotions. These promotions should not all be discount or bargain focused. These promotions could capitalise on existing events:

- ▶ Sports Saturday where retailers all deck out their shops in the local team colours and invite local football stars to sign autographs or run sports clinics in the main street
- ▶ Christmas sales or promotions. This could tie in with the Christmas Mardi Gras
- ▶ Crazy Day with sales tables outside retail outlets, spruikers and super specials
- ▶ School Holiday Kids Day with kids meals, competitions, lucky dips for children, buskers etc.
  - This promotion could also have a charity component where retailers collect cash or goods for a local children's charity
- ▶ "Get Growing" or "Blooming Bargains" event to tie in with the flower festival or garden festival

## Wee Waa Website

As the website is a key tool for disseminating information to the local community it would be a good idea to actively promote it to local residents. Options include:

- ▶ A letterbox drop of a flyer or postcard to the local postcode
  - The postcard could promote the business directory and include a special offer from local businesses to encourage them to log on to the website
- ▶ Retailers including the postcard or promotional flyer in all bags or handing to customers over a two to four week period
- ▶ Cafes placing postcards or flyers on tables for a two to four week period
- ▶ Inclusion of the website address on new marketing collateral or when existing material is reprinted

## New Residents

A New Residents pack is an ideal way to target newcomers to the area. The pack could include:

- ▶ A welcome letter from the Chamber of Commerce local businesses community
- ▶ Links to the business directory and [www.weewaa.com](http://www.weewaa.com) website
- ▶ Wee Waa Community Guide
- ▶ Value add offers from individual businesses e.g. free coffee with your first lunch order at a cafe. Free gourmet sausages with your first meat order.
  - This concept also works particularly well with a welcome card which entitles new residents to special deals for a 3 month period. (I suggest that the pack focus on value add offers e.g. free gift wrapping rather than a 10% discount). The card quickly identifies the new resident to the retailer and helps build a strong relationship ensuring repeat visits.
- ▶ A simple fun flyer on "tips and tricks for locals"; this might include anything from the chemist who makes deliveries, to information about favourite fishing spots or when the bakery makes its famous fruit scones
  - This information can also be included as a PDF on the website

- ▶ This pack is also one place where junk mail in the form of takeaway menus or promotional flyers will be welcomed rather than consigned to the rubbish bin!
- ▶ In most communities real estate agents are happy to distribute these packs on behalf of the local business organisation

## Destination Visitors

### Recreational Shoppers

There is real potential for the Wee Waa business community to actively market its mix of browsing shops to residents of Narrabri and surrounding areas. Direct marketing strategies include:

- ▶ Mail out to local postcodes promoting extended weekend trading hours, or promotional events
- ▶ Distribution of "Day in flyers" to Visitor Information Centres within four hours drive of Wee Waa
- ▶ Direct marketing to accommodation providers in surrounding towns and Narrabri to encourage them to include the Day in Flyer in their compendiums
- ▶ Distribution of "Day In" flyers cross promoting browsing outlets in browsing shops and destination outlets

It may be possible to also increase the marketing of Wee Waa's browsing outlets through existing marketing material developed through Narrabri Tourism. This could involve:

- ▶ Adding information on the browsing mix when material is reprinted
- ▶ Inserting "day in" flyers during peak periods

### Visitors to Health Services, Professional Services and Agricultural Services

Wee Waa has a number of professional practices, health professionals and agricultural businesses that attract people to Wee Waa. There is potential to increase these customers length of stay and average spend with a DL flyer or postcard displayed in these businesses.

This leaflet or flyer should aim to increase the amount of time the visitor spends in the area. I envisage this leaflet would be DL size double sided which could be displayed in the reception area in a Perspex holder. This could be titled "While you are here" ... and detail a short itinerary of things to do and see. The itinerary would include tourist attractions and retail businesses e.g. Museum, Historical Walk, Vanilla slice at the bakery, counter lunch at the pub, browsing at The Green Door etc.

There is also an opportunity to get individual cafes involved with promotions to some of these destination visitors. Professional practices could be supplied with complimentary coffee vouchers which are given to clients or patients who have to wait to see their consultant. Have a coffee on us! The practice can pay a nominal amount for this voucher if required, but most cafes find the visitor usually buys another coffee for a friend plus a cake or snack. It will be important to share the leads and match the health or professional practice and café to make sure the voucher provides target customers for the café operator.

It will be important to gain the involvement of the professional practices that will hopefully see this initiative as a way of participating in the marketing of Wee Waa.

### Cross Promotion to existing databases

There are a number of retail outlets and service businesses in Wee Waa that will attract destination shoppers. For example, agricultural supply and machinery businesses, Little House on Rose and Robbie's Country Clothing.

It is likely that some of these businesses have established mail lists and will blog, send e-newsletters or produce mail outs for their customers. In some regional communities a number of businesses have got together to cross promote other (non

competing) services their customers may be interested in; for instance, a blind retailer, kitchen supply company, mortgage broker, lighting store and homewares store got together to promote the range of services for homeowners/purchasers in their main street. The success of this strategy very much depends on how willing businesses are to work together.

In one community, the Chamber provided a PDF flyer promoting the diversity of destination outlets and a number of businesses forwarded it to their client list at the same time as their e-newsletter

## Tourists

### Special Interest Visitors

There are a wide range of special interest visitors to Wee Waa who are attracted by the bird life, fishing, national parks, artesian bores and local agricultural industries. Narrabri Tourism are effectively marketing to these target groups and the local business community should liaise with the Tourism Manager to make sure they can capitalise on groups who may be visiting the area. In other small towns the Chamber has facilitated this through:

- ▶ A calendar of visitors and events on the website
- ▶ A monthly or weekly email to interested businesses detailing group visits

In other small towns, local businesses have capitalised on this opportunity by:

- ▶ Adding a local tourist attraction to an existing itinerary
- ▶ Catering for a lunch or morning tea with a brief presentation by a local historian or expert
- ▶ Providing lunch packs for the group
- ▶ Providing an interesting venue for a meeting or conference

### Visitors

Although Wee Waa is not a traditional tourism town there is potential to "pull" more visitors into the main street from the Museum, wineries and attractions such as Cuttabri Wine Shanty with a "day in" flyer cross promoting the retail offering and browsing shops in Wee Waa.

The accommodation and tourism businesses in Narrabri may also have a major impact on the successful marketing of Wee Waa. There is potential to boost business by actively promoting the browsing mix to accommodation providers through "famils". (This strategy was successfully used by businesses in Maclean to attract cloudy day visitors from nearby Yamba).

The town hosted small groups of tourism operators for a site visit showing them the sights, explaining the history and allowing them to sample one or two food outlets. This was also a great chance for them to meet local business owners. Following this initiative they saw an increase in visitation within a matter of weeks.

If Wee Waa were interested in this type of program the Chamber could partner with the Museum and local wineries to conduct the famils.

### RV Travellers

The RV market is a growing opportunity for Wee Waa. Although the town does not have a lot of caravan sites to promote overnight or longer term stays, the aim should be to hold this market in town for longer so they can spend more.

Although the fixed income "grey nomads" have a reputation of being low spenders the self funded baby boomers and retirees called "wanderers" can be high spenders. They will spend on meals, especially local food, gifts for family and grand children and even on accommodation when they want a luxury break from their vehicles. They are also keen users of the internet to keep in touch with friends and family.

These travellers are strong referrers and tend to spread the word to their fellow travellers.

In addition to carrying stock specifically for this market there is potential to increase the promotion of Wee Waa as an RV friendly town through

- ▶ A "day in" leaflet promoting specific attractions, outlets etc for the caravan market
- ▶ Dedicated RV parking and increased signage in the main street promoting the parking
- ▶ Participating at trade shows or joining other communities who are promoting at shows such as The Caravan and Camping show
- ▶ To maximise the impact of these events and stand out from other exhibitors it will be important to carry RV specific marketing messages and leaflets at the show such as
  - Pictures of local sights with a caravan in the foreground
  - Including testimonials from RV travellers in the display
  - Using graphic devices such as wheel tracks or an awning in the display
  - Using local RV owners to staff the stand during weekdays when the majority of Wanderers attend the shows

## Overnight Visitors

Although there are not a large number of people visiting Wee Waa overnight, this market should not be forgotten

- ▶ Wee Waa Community Guide should be placed in all accommodation outlets on a regular basis
- ▶ Interested businesses could also look at creating an "information pack" for motel room compendiums. This pack could include:
  - Promotion of all the eating options including opening hours of businesses
  - Promotion of individual outlets

## Business owners and retail staff

A great way to kickstart the marketing of Wee Waa is to build the sense of community amongst the local businesses. A marketing program to encourage workers to spend in the town can be a good way of opening up communication channels and overcoming possible complacency about the changing markets in Wee Waa.

A program for retailers can also act as a first step to encourage business owners and staff to work together whilst generating revenue from this often overlooked market segment.

- ▶ A "Local Retailer" club card can be effective way to encourage staff to shop locally. These cards can entitle staff to special offers or discounts in relevant outlets. One retail community selects five special offers a month and promotes them in an email blast to all businesses in their business directory. These offers are spread across the range of businesses and services and do not have to be discount focused. Offers can include anything from a 24 hour head start on an advertised special, a value add such as a free sample shampoo with a cut and colour to a free information pack from a professional practice.
- ▶ There are also opportunities for individual outlets to market directly to retail staff in the area. For instance, direct marketing of specials or distribution of catalogues. Most retail staff take lunch and tea breaks outside peak times so cafes and takeaways can provide off peak specials or deliveries to nearby outlets.

One regional business community got sponsorship for a mug campaign where all retail staff were given a themed coffee mug as a part of the campaign. As many staff can't afford to take coffee breaks outside their retail outlet, but hate drinking out of takeaway cups their own coffee mug was a welcome gift. Cafes joined in the spirit of the promotion and filled the mug for the cost of a cup of coffee.

## Local Staff and workers

The Chamber or Council Economic Development Officer may be able to liaise with major employers in the town to identify key products and services that will be useful

for onsite employees. These can then be promoted in a simple flyer or email which can be displayed in staff rooms, distributed to all staff with company information or emailed to all new employees. Information in the flyer should be specific and include opening hours and contact details for relevant businesses. Businesses that could be promoted in the flyer include:

- ▶ Pharmacy and medical services
- ▶ Laundry services
- ▶ Post office
- ▶ Professional services
- ▶ Trade services e.g. vehicle repairers
- ▶ Health services
- ▶ Hardware supplies
- ▶ Banks and building societies

Some companies may have a canteen on site but if cafes and bakeries are willing to participate, the flyer could also include services like delivery of lunches or fax/email ahead for lunch orders.

To launch the development, Wee Waa could produce "Honorary Local" cards which encourage repeat visits and entitle local employees to different bonuses e.g. Buy 5 coffees and the 6<sup>th</sup> is free.

# Implementation

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## Skills Development

Skills development seminars are the most effective way of maintaining and improving customer service and retail skills such as merchandising and display. It can be a good idea to combine skills development with an event such as annual Business Awards (see appendix). Seminars should be held three or four months before the awards are judged.

- ▶ Some Wee Waa retailers would benefit from a workshop and one-on-one advice on window display and visual merchandising
- ▶ Destination outlets may benefit from a workshop on e-Marketing or a chance to work with a consultant with expertise in databases, online sales and marketing
- ▶ Food and beverage outlets would benefit from Barista and food presentation training

Given the recent financial downturn some businesses are likely to need help with financial management. Ideally advice should be one-on one and this may be provided by a consultant or regional business advisory group.

There is also potential for hosting a workshop and Federal and State Government are mooted to be developing programs to help small businesses cope in the current climate.

## Staffing

A key issue for the Chamber is the lack of “hands on” support and people who can implement ideas and run initiatives.

It is obvious that many members of the Wee Waa Chamber are ready to embrace change and adopt initiatives that will increase awareness and revenue for Wee Waa businesses. However, as most members already have extensive business, family and community commitments they are unlikely to find the time to actually manage the implementation of strategies and initiatives suggested in the Township Marketing Plan.

Wee Waa is fortunate to have the support of the Narrabri Shire Council community development officer supporting the group but they also look after a number of other initiatives and it is unlikely that they will have time to commit to any hands on work for the Chamber.

The ideal solution is to fund or source funding for a part time coordinator to implement initiatives and handle the day to day administration of the group. In my experience, communities that rely on volunteers for implementation do not generally achieve results as quickly as communities that have a dedicated coordinator. This funding may be available through NSW Department of Investment and Industry as a follow on from the Small Chamber funding program or through funding to develop an event for Wee Waa.

## Implementation

To motivate the business community it is important that the Wee Waa Chamber is seen to have “runs on the board” in terms of business development as soon as possible.

Initiatives from the Business Community Plan can be used to increase awareness of the Chamber. Ideally these can be promoted through

- ▶ Publicity in the local newspaper
- ▶ A launch to local businesses

Following the launch, there is an opportunity to select one or two high profile initiatives that can be delivered within a couple of months. A campaign name, shop

local campaign or quarterly events would be ideal starters followed by a retailer's program and skills development workshop.

## Summary of Initiatives

- ▶ Logo and positioning statement for Chamber
- ▶ Operating name for Chamber
- ▶ Promote Chamber/Business district
- ▶ Search Engine Optimisation of associated Council and tourist websites
- ▶ Business Welcome Kit
- ▶ Source target retail businesses to enhance the browsing/retail mix
- ▶ Meeting to discuss gaps in retail and product mix
- ▶ Shopping basket survey
- ▶ Trial extended trading hours
- ▶ Flags, A Boards
- ▶ Displays for vacant premises
- ▶ Retail signage audit
- ▶ Visual Merchandising skills development workshops/one on one advice
- ▶ Day in flyers
- ▶ Research potential for establishing an event
- ▶ Shop Local campaign
- ▶ Quarterly retail events
- ▶ Promote weewaa.com website
- ▶ New resident welcome pack
- ▶ Marketing to Recreational Shoppers
- ▶ Families for accommodation providers in Narrabri and surrounding areas
- ▶ Marketing to Health and professional service visitors
- ▶ Calendar or email to advise business owners of visiting groups
- ▶ Marketing to RV visitors
- ▶ Compendium for accommodation providers
- ▶ Retailer Club Card
- ▶ Flyer for local employees
- ▶ "While you are here" flyer for professional/health practices
- ▶ Skills development program
- ▶ Part time coordinator

# Appendix

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## Business Awards

Business awards are a great way of recognising achievements and encouraging local businesses to improve their performance. For maximum impact the awards need to be seen as inspirational and motivational for participants.

In many regional communities business awards are run by the local press and take the form of popular vote. Although these awards are very effective at involving the broader community they tend to lack credibility with the business community and would not be recommended for Wee Waa. However, a popular vote can certainly be included as a part of any business award.

There are two basic concepts that would work well for Wee Waa: The first is ideal for a predominantly retail business community and requires very little active effort from the businesses themselves. This means high participation levels.

### Business Awards – Option One

- ▶ Businesses are nominated as finalists in set categories. Nominations are made by The Chamber, an existing business group or a special committee convened specially for this event. To avoid problems of perceived bias, members of the committee can be nominated from outside the business community. They might include a member of local council, BEC representative, local business advisor e.g. accountant.
  - The committee would review all eligible business when making nominations. It is not unusual for a significant number of businesses to be nominated in this type of award
- ▶ The categories can be tailored to suit the business mix in the community but might include
  - Fashion
  - Jewellery and gifts
  - Hair and beauty
  - Takeaway Foods
  - Cafes and restaurants
  - Accommodation
  - Tourism
  - General services
  - Trade and motor services
  - Agricultural Services
  - Telecommunications and electrical
  - Leisure and entertainment
- ▶ In addition to business categories there would also be major awards such as
  - Business of the year
  - Business operator of the year
  - Employee of the year
- ▶ Once selected, finalists in each category are mystery shopped to test customer service, staff presentation and store presentation.
- ▶ The committee then culls the list to two or four potential winners in each category
- ▶ These are then judged by a person from outside the town who would typically spend a day in Wee Waa reviewing businesses and interviewing finalists in business operator of the year. This judge could be the marketing or centre manager of a regional shopping centre, a business consultant, DSRD business development officer or lecturer in retail or small business from Tafe or university.

- ▶ Judging criteria could include
  - Customer Service and staff presentation
  - Store presentation including window display and merchandising
  - Marketing activities including advertising, signage, image etc
  - Community involvement
- ▶ Business Operator of the year and Employee of the year would be judged on the entry form submitted and a brief interview.
- ▶ These awards culminate in a dinner or special event where certificates or trophies are presented. This can be as formal or as informal as the committee chooses. For instance Bourke hold their annual business awards in a beer garden but everyone dresses up for the event. In other communities the event is held in the community hall and catered for by the CWA, held as a cocktail event at a local function centre or becomes a black tie sit down dinner with guest presenters. Prizes can range from advertising space donated by local media to donated business products such as computer software and shopping vouchers for employee awards. In some communities prizes such as travel or gift packs are donated by the local business community or large companies in the area.

### **Business Awards - Option Two**

- ▶ The second business award concept involves more participation from business owners and therefore tends to have a lower participation rate. It is more appropriate for a community that has a broad range of businesses.
- ▶ Businesses are invited by the Chamber to enter the awards and complete an award submission. Typically there would be less award categories which could be decided according the local business mix but might include
  - Best business with less than 5 employees
  - Best business with 5 – 10 employees
  - Best business with 10 – 20 employees
  - Best service business
  - Best retail business
  - Best customer service
  - Most innovative business
  - Best tourism and accommodation business
- ▶ In each category participants would be required to fill out a submission answering a range of questions. The questions will vary in each category but a typical entrant might be asked about
  - Business history
  - Key success factors
  - Customer service initiatives
  - Staff management
  - Plans for the future
  - Overcoming challenges
  - Use of technology in their business
- ▶ These submissions are really mini business plans and completing them is usually a worthwhile process for participants. In some communities the local BEC or training organisation runs a workshop on filling in the entry form which gives business owners confidence in the process. For ease of judging, submissions should be less than ten pages.
- ▶ Once submissions have been made they can be evaluated by a judge or judging panel. As some of the information in the entries would be confidential it is advisable to have someone from outside the area conduct the judging. The business development officer from DSRD, a business advisor or accountant, Tafe small business lecturer or similar could all act as judges.

- ▶ Finalists in each category would be selected from the submissions and then briefly interviewed. Judging can be carried out in town or conducted by phone if necessary.
- ▶ These awards culminate in a dinner or award ceremony. As there is quite a bit of time and commitment required by entrants, awards for this type of presentation need to be significant. Cash, grants, business equipment, business services or travel would all be desirable. It is usual for participants to pay for the awards dinner and many bring their staff along.

### **Business Awards - General**

- ▶ No matter what award format you choose the awards will need a name. It may be possible to launch the awards with a competition where local businesses and staff are given the opportunity to come up with a good name in return for a small prize.
- ▶ Most business awards require additional funding. Ideally this will come from major businesses in the area or government departments such as DSRD. It is important that these sponsors receive value for their money and be given tangible benefits for their sponsorship. These benefits might include
  - Logo on entry forms and posters
  - Inclusion in all press releases and marketing material
  - A place on the organising or judging committee
  - An opportunity to present one of the major awards at the ceremony
  - Signage such as banners at the awards night
  - Invitation to any associated social events
  - The committee may also wish to give naming rights of the awards to a sponsor

## **Shopping Basket Research**

This simple research compares a "shopping list" of grocery and food items between retailers in different areas. This is a great way of identifying whether price or variety are factors in "escape spending" (where locals shop in other areas). Ideally, this list should be compiled by a representative group of locals as it is important that it represents the type of products locals might buy.

The pharmacy, bakery, liquor store, supermarkets and hardware store can be approached to put together a list of items they would like included on the list. The list should include:

- ▶ Daily staples such as bread and milk
- ▶ Brand name items e.g. Kellogg Cornflakes
- ▶ Generic or no name items
- ▶ Specialty and gourmet items
- ▶ Products likely to be purchased by families
- ▶ Products likely to be purchased by single people/retirees

Select up to three locations for comparative shopping

This researcher will not need any specific skills but must be accurate in recording the data. In some communities retirees have been happy to carry out this research.

Shopping Basket research is also very effective at comparing prices in categories other than day to day or grocery needs. Some communities have compared baskets on home furnishings, major purchases and even professional services.