

Business
Community
Marketing Plan

For

Bega Chamber
of Commerce &
Industry

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Table of Contents

First Impressions	3
Bega Focus Group	9
Key Issues	12
Target Markets	14
Consolidation.....	15
Marketing Strategies	23
Development Projects	28

First Impressions

General

This information has been gathered from a site visit to Bega which included an orientation tour of the area by car, a visit to The Heritage Centre, a walking tour and review of the main street and central business precinct. The visit also included a trip to Tura Beach and a brief review of Merimbula central business precinct to compare the retail mix of both towns.

Chris Maxted of the Bega Chamber of Commerce acted as my guide for the onsite visit.

Objectives

The aim of the retail review was to identify the key issues that will have an impact on the future marketing of Bega.

The review encompassed:

- ▶ Approaches to the town
- ▶ Main street
- ▶ Architecture and Streetscape
- ▶ Retail Mix
- ▶ Product Mix
- ▶ Signage
- ▶ Identity and branding
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Retail Skills
- ▶ Tourism

Town Review

Approaches

- ▶ Bega is a major regional service town located on the Princes Highway
 - It is 426 kilometres from Sydney and 606 kilometres from Melbourne
 - The nearest regional centre is Batemans Bay 149 kilometres away
 - The coastal town of Merimbula is 33km away
- ▶ The town is approached from North and South along the Princes Highway
 - Locals also access Bega from Merimbula and Tura Beach via Sapphire Coast Drive and Tathra Road
- ▶ The approaches to Bega are very attractive and scenic. The town is a “green oasis” surrounded by hills and there is a real sense of arrival once you reach the township
- ▶ There are standard Bega Valley Shire gateway signs on all town entrances
 - There is also a large sign stating “Bega Valley says No to Domestic Violence” which may give the impression that Bega is a violent or risky town
- ▶ A by-pass is mooted for Bega that would be completed within 5 years
- ▶ The Heritage Centre is located on the Northern approach to town and appears to attract a large number of visitors. On the day of the site visit (Wednesday around 10.30am) the car park was busy and the café was bustling with visitors
 - It is possible that visitors who stop at the Heritage Centre will not stop again in the Bega CBD

Main Street

- ▶ The highway runs through the main street of Bega and the main street is typical of a regional service town. At first glance
 - It seems neat and tidy
 - It appears busy and functional rather than pretty and “villagey”
 - It appears to be focused on locals rather than visitors
- ▶ The main street has a defined beginning and end and is relatively wide with less trucks or heavy vehicles than expected
- ▶ The business precinct is very compact with the majority of retail, trade, service and health businesses on or around the main street
- ▶ At first glance it is hard to tell whether the main street has “browsing” appeal, there is evidence of cafés and outdoor eating but not a lot of typical browsing shops
- ▶ There are a number of outdoor eating areas outside cafes including Pats Place, Gloria Jeans, Pepperberries, Niagara Café and The Goose Is Out café
 - These areas enhance the look of the main street and would encourage visitors to stop
- ▶ There are a number of business “precincts” that are not visible to passing traffic
 - The Woolworths complex which can be accessed from Auckland Street and the car park which runs behind Carp Street
 - This is due for redevelopment to include Big W and 30 – 35 new retail outlets
 - The car park has been landscaped which adds to its appeal
 - The car park is also the site for the Farmers Market held every second Friday
 - The Coles Supermarket at the Eastern end of Carp Street which has its own car park
 - Target is mooted to move into this precinct in the next 12 months
 - Ayers Walkway which links the main street to the car park and Woolworths Complex. The walkway includes a café, bookshop and several boutique retail outlets
 - Church Street which has an interesting mix of gift and food outlets and a number of heritage buildings
 - Canning Street which is home to many of the health practitioners in Bega
 - This street consists mainly of residences converted into business premises
 - In Auckland Street there is a small group of shops and offices trading as the Auckland Street Mall

Architecture and Streetscape

- ▶ Bega main street has a mix of modern and heritage architecture which blends well for the most part
- ▶ Church Street has more of a village feel due to the interesting architecture and mix of businesses
- ▶ Most of the more modern buildings are sympathetic to the heritage streetscape although there are one or two which dominate with bright colour schemes or dominant facades
- ▶ There is a clock tower located at the intersection of Carp and Gipps streets
- ▶ The main street features wide pavements which appear to have been repaved recently between Peden and Parker streets
 - Pavements at the end of the main street and down side streets are not as decorative
- ▶ There are telegraph and light poles along the length of the main street
- ▶ There is not a lot of colour or movement in the main street

- It should be noted that the site visit was during Winter
- ▶ Street furniture is painted a blue/green which is consistently used throughout the CBD
- ▶ Other features of the streetscape include
 - Tree plantings
 - Some in the road which are protected by timber and ironwork tree guards
 - Some on the pavement protected by round iron work grills
 - Bench seating (some coloured, some timber) along the main street and in Ayers Walkway
 - Rubbish bin surrounds painted green
- ▶ There are two features of the streetscape
 - An arbour and seating area in the main street adjacent to the Commonwealth bank
 - An outdoor eating area and decorative fencing in Auckland Street
- ▶ At the time of the site visit there were a few vacant shops and one major empty retail space (Ex Body Guard on the corner of Ayers Walkway) which made that area of the street feel a little run down

Signage

- ▶ General directional signage is adequate for the local market but visitors could do with more/clearer parking signage
- ▶ There are some excellent examples of creative and professional signage in Bega. Notable examples include:
 - Themed awning signage for a number of outlets in the main street
 - This appears to be an initiative of the building owner and gives a corporate style branding whilst maintaining their individual identity
 - Small independent outlets such as Studio 157, Tiles@ Bega and Magpie Music have very modern and professional shop fronts and window decals that enhance the streetscape
 - A number of service businesses or organisations such as Far South Coast Community College have strong shopfronts and window displays
 - A number of retailers have quirky and/or interesting under awning signs e.g. Frillneck signs and the cow above awning sign for Wilson's Butchers
- ▶ Most of the major or chain retailers such as Priceline also have very professional signage which enhances the streetscape
- ▶ Building and shop signage is a problem in some areas of the main street with
 - A number of faded and peeling signs
 - Out of date signs where a business has closed but signs haven't been removed or replaced
 - Old heritage signs which can no longer be read
 - A lack of above awning signage which can make it difficult for passing traffic to identify what businesses are operating in the main street
- ▶ There is little or no under awning signage in some areas which can make it difficult for shoppers to see what shops are in the main street
- ▶ There is also excellent use of A Boards with a number of businesses using them to promote products and give their business street appeal.
 - Generally these are placed safely and used well to promote products and services
- ▶ A number of businesses are using product racks or brochure stands outside their outlet to promote their products or services
 - Again, these are generally well placed, although on the day of the site visit the amount of stock outside Go Lo looked cluttered
- ▶ Bega obviously has an active Chamber of Commerce and some shops are featuring "Bega on the Go" stickers in their windows

Parking

- ▶ During the site visit (on a Wednesday/Thursday) there was plenty of main street parking available
 - It should be noted that residents and business owners often have a negative perception of parking if they cannot park directly outside the outlet they are visiting
- ▶ The tree guards that jut out into the main street could make it difficult to park in adjacent car parking spaces
 - There is also the risk of damage to vehicles trying to manoeuvre around the tree guards
- ▶ There was also ample parking in designated parking areas behind the main street
 - Parking may be adversely affected by the development of Woolworths and Target sites

Retail Mix

- ▶ Bega has an exceptionally strong and impressive retail mix for a town of its size
- ▶ The day to day needs of local residents and residents from surrounding areas are well serviced with a choice of outlets in most fresh food categories. The retail mix review showed two supermarkets, two bakeries, two butchers, a health food shop and wholefood shop
 - There is no independent fruit and vegetable retailer but the fortnightly fresh produce markets would enhance the fresh food offering even further
- ▶ Residents would be able to make many of their large purchases in town with five car dealerships, 2 whitegoods retailers and a number of businesses selling beds, furniture and home renovation supplies ranging from tiles to bathroom suites and light fittings
- ▶ There are almost 100 businesses in the main street and 90 in the streets around the CBD
 - This is a rough estimate only and does not include a number of professional practices above street level or the individual practitioners in some of the health practices
- ▶ 34 of these service the daily needs of the local community
 - These include pharmacies, newsagent, hardware, fresh food etc
- ▶ 6 hair and beauty businesses are located in the main shopping precinct
- ▶ The town also has some excellent “destination” businesses and services that are unexpected in a town the size of Bega. These include costume hire, piano sales, computer shop and cartridge world
- ▶ The café/takeaway food mix is particularly strong with 14 businesses covering everything from pizza and pasta, fish and chips to noodles, café foods and healthy
 - The food mix is notable because each outlet has a distinctive point of difference and targets a cross section of the community
 - In some communities all outlets have similar menus
- ▶ The range of health and wellbeing services are exceptional with no less than 25 businesses ranging from gyms, GP’s and consultants to dentists, optometrists, pathology labs and health insurance providers
 - Alternative health practitioners are also very well represented and Bega has a strong concentration of services ranging from acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicines to naturopathy and Reiki therapy
 - The health mix also includes community services and a public and private hospital
- ▶ The health and wellbeing focus is also reflected in the retail mix which includes health food and whole food shops
- ▶ The town has retained its banks and credit unions which is vital for a service town
- ▶ Bega also has a broad range of professional services which will attract clients from surrounding areas

- ▶ The browsing mix is stronger than it first appears with
 - 11 fashion outlets including Rockman's and Target Country
 - Most fashion is budget to mid range pricing
 - 13 gift, homewares, books and browsing shops
 - This includes shops that would have appeal to visitors such as Magpie Music, Nursery, pets, craft and aquarium/pet shops
- ▶ Bega also has a high number of home renovation and building supply shops such as Carpet Court, Tradelink Plumbing, which would be destination outlets attracting people to town
- ▶ There are several name "chain" stores in Bega including Priceline, Target, Harris Scarfe and Rockman's

Product Mix

- ▶ A large number of retail businesses are actively targeting the local market
 - Judging by the products stocked in many outlets, there also appears to be a general assumption that the local market is conservative, not affluent and is somewhat price focused.
 - There are also conflicting messages in some outlets
 - There is some evidence that some retailers have been struggling and have added new lines of stock or diversified into other products in an attempt to attract more customers and boost revenue. Others appear to have been in business for a number of years and have diversified over a period of time. Both of these strategies have led to "mixed messages" about stock, price ranges and target markets.
- ▶ Given the large number of alternative health practitioners and health food shops I would have expected to see more products geared specifically at the "green" or "new age" market

Image and Branding

- ▶ Bega the town has high recognition and awareness partly due to the ongoing advertising of Bega Cheese
- ▶ There is no visible Bega branding in the form of a town logo or positioning statement
- ▶ The council website shows a coloured "logo" featuring mountains, sun and water but this is shown independent to the Shire name
- ▶ A web search for Bega brought up visitnsw as the first listing followed by total travel, LJ Hooker Bega and Bega Valley Shire Council
- ▶ A web search for Bega accommodation brought up last minute, total travel on the first page of listings
- ▶ The second page featured a number of individual businesses including Bega Caravan Park, Bega Valley Backpackers and Southtown Motor Inn. Pickled Pear B & B also appeared on this page along with visitnsw, sapphire coast and south coast accommodation
- ▶ Surprisingly Bega Chamber does not rate number one in searches for businesses, or business although it does rank on the first page of listings searching for Chamber Bega
- ▶ Bega cheese and The Heritage Centre does not rank highly on general Bega searches

Tourism

- ▶ There is limited accommodation in Bega so it is unlikely to become a tourism destination in the short to medium term
- ▶ There are limited options for evening dining
- ▶ The majority of the towns businesses trade for 5.5 days

- ▶ The Heritage Centre is the best known tourist attraction in Bega. It is located on the Northern approach to town and is very well patronised
- ▶ Other tourist attractions include
 - Bega Regional Art Gallery
 - Bega Heritage Walk
- ▶ There is a mini Visitor Information Centre operating out of the Heritage Centre
 - It is manned by volunteers but exhibits very high standards of professionalism
 - Staff were friendly and knowledgeable
 - Information was kept neat and tidy and layed out in logical and attractive displays
- ▶ Tourism marketing material carried at the VIC included
 - Cartoscope Map of the Sapphire Coast
 - DL sized black and white Bega Heritage Walk leaflet
 - DL sized one colour BEGA information leaflet
 - This was basic in layout and design but included some excellent information
- ▶ At the time of the site visit there was no information displayed on the Regional Art Gallery

Retail Skills

- ▶ Levels of general retailing skills vary greatly with some very professional outlets standing out from the pack
 - There was also evidence of very low level skills where owners had little or no retail experience and had chosen the wrong location or mix of stock for their target market
- ▶ There are some excellent examples of professional window displays, however, there are also a large number who are not maximising the opportunities to attract customers. Typical problems include:
 - Windows filled with posters and notices which block the view into the shop
 - Dirty windows or dated window displays that haven't been changed in months
 - Non existent window displays or stock facing inwards only
 - Faded or old stock in the window
 - Poor lighting or lights turned off in window displays
- ▶ Merchandising also varied amongst outlets. Typical problems include:
 - Cluttered displays that are hard to navigate
 - Fixtures and fittings screening the view of stock
 - Stock not arranged in a logical or easy to find way
 - Messy shelves
 - Lack of branding for the outlet within the shop
 - Lack of directional signage and branding within the outlet
- ▶ Customer service is hard to judge on a single visit and obviously varies from outlet to outlet but overall appears friendly.
- ▶ There was generally a good differentiation between outlets in the same category i.e. carrying different ranges of stock and targeting different markets

Bega Focus Group

A meeting of local business owners was held on Wednesday September 9, 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.

Attendees included: Cindy Apps, Malcolm Barnes, David Armstrong, Judy Hannam, Robert Hayson, Paul Healey, Anna Leamon, Ross Ritchie, John Watkins and Linda Weedon

The group was asked a series of questions in relation to Bega. 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?

- ▶ The area is traditionally a farming district so locals include dairy and beef farmers on local properties
 - There are also a number of older farmers who move into town when they retire
- ▶ Bega is a working class town with most people on a relatively low income
 - There is higher income in some of the surrounding villages
- ▶ Bega is the major service town for the area
- ▶ The town is fairly conservative
- ▶ Bega is a stable community
- ▶ A lot of people are welfare recipients
- ▶ A large number of people are self employed
- ▶ Retirees from out of the area relocate to Bega
 - A large number of these are fixed income
- ▶ There is a small local indigenous community
 - There is also an indigenous community in Bermagui
- ▶ People who are employed by the Cheese Factory
- ▶ Council employees
- ▶ There is a strong business community in Bega

Have you seen any changes in the local population in the last five years?

- ▶ There is a growing community of “downshiffters”; people who have moved from city areas for a better quality life for them and their children
- ▶ There is a growing community of “alternative” culture residents with an interest in green issues, sustainability etc
- ▶ The town is losing young people 18 to 30
- ▶ More first home buyers are attracted to the area
- ▶ The real estate market is flat and there is a lot of land for sale
- ▶ Real estate investment slowed down 2 – 3 years ago

How would you describe your visitor market?

- ▶ Bega is a daytime town, people come here to work but will go other places for dinner or entertainment
- ▶ People from surrounding towns visiting to do their weekly shopping

- Tathra, Kalaru, Candelo, Wolumia, Bemboka, Quaama and Cobargo
- ▶ People visiting Bega to see the health professionals
 - There are a lot of health services and a number of Drs and consultants fly in and out of Bega
- ▶ Work crews based in the area
- ▶ Sales reps
- ▶ People attending events in the area e.g.
 - Merimbula Rock Festival
 - Sports events such as motocross and soccer
 - The local show
 - Horse event held after Christmas
- ▶ People visiting friends and relatives, especially in school holidays
 - People attending weddings and reunions
- ▶ People staying in Merimbula or on the coast tend to visit Bega on wet days when they can't go to the beach
- ▶ People travelling up and down the coast road to Melbourne
- ▶ Grey nomads and wanderers
 - Numbers increase over the Christmas period
 - A lot of these stop at the Heritage Centre/Cheese Factory
 - Caravan and RV parking can be a problem in the main street

What do you think are the "gaps" in the Bega business mix?

- ▶ Menswear
- ▶ Somewhere for functions
- ▶ Cinema
- ▶ More evening dining options
 - A family restaurant
- ▶ Extended trading hours
- ▶ Most businesses are currently open 5.5 days
 - Chemist is open for 2 hours on a Sunday
- ▶ More franchises
- ▶ More major retailers
- ▶ Better customer service

What are the attractions of Bega?

- ▶ Clean. Green
- ▶ Affordability of housing
- ▶ Friendly town
- ▶ Hospital and public and private health services
- ▶ Employment opportunities
- ▶ It's a one stop Shire
- ▶ The town has banks, professional services
- ▶ It is the main office for the Council
- ▶ It has a library
- ▶ Art Gallery
- ▶ There are a lot of good schools in the town
- ▶ It has a real history
- ▶ Great sporting facilities
- ▶ A range of service clubs
- ▶ The farmers market and fresh produce
- ▶ A lot of arts and crafts
- ▶ It's close to the coast

- ▶ The marketing of Bega through Bega Cheese

What challenges do you think Bega is facing?

- ▶ The planned by-pass at the Heritage Centre on the main road will make Bega a "less easy" place to visit
- ▶ We need more parking and better parking signage
 - There is not enough parking for larger vehicles
- ▶ We need more public toilets
- ▶ Some of the buildings are tired looking
 - There is potential to brighten up the main street
 - There is potential to do up the Town Hall
 - Council should move unsightly businesses out of the main street
- ▶ There is a large "The Bega Valley says no to domestic violence" sign at the town entrances which could give the wrong impression of Bega
- ▶ There is a lack of signage on the South side entrance to town
- ▶ Keeping locals spending their money in town
- ▶ Increasing the overall professionalism of businesses

What do you think might be the impact of the new development?

- ▶ It will increase the catchment area for Bega
- ▶ It will attract people from a wider area
- ▶ The location is good as it is adjacent to the CBD
- ▶ Some outlets will lose customers
- ▶ There is a risk that shoppers won't move beyond the new development into the main street
- ▶ The building phase will be an opportunity as there will be workers in town
- ▶ The town will have longer trading hours
- ▶ Thursday night and weekend trading
- ▶ Some businesses may relocate
- ▶ Some businesses may close

Key Issues

Like most regional business communities, Bega businesses are facing a number of opportunities and challenges. Based on the retail review of the Bega shopping precinct the following key issues have been identified:

Image and Branding

Bega currently does not have a distinctive image or brand that is associated with the business community. The Chamber has a logo based around the clock tower which appears on their website but the website does not rank well on web searches and the Bega Shire Council website does not include any information on business or tourism.

Although a web presence has traditionally been more important for towns targeting the tourism market, anecdotal evidence suggests that more and more residents are looking for local businesses and services on line.

There is potential for the Bega chamber logo and website to become a key marketing tool for the local business community. Improved SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and links from the Council website would also give the broader community better access to information about Bega.

Ensuring the Survival of the Main Street

The planned redevelopment of the Woolworths complex and relocation of Target Country is likely to change the dynamics of retailing in Bega. The new Woolworths complex will certainly broaden the catchment area of Bega and bring new people to town but it will also result in short term loss of business for main street retailers as local shoppers "sample" the new centre.

The new centre will attract new businesses to town and it is likely that some of these will be chains attracted by the pulling power of the larger Woolworths. It is also likely that a number of businesses will relocate to the mall from the main street which will leave gaps in the main street mix. This means that the main street could become less relevant to the local shopper and businesses may experience less and less visitation.

It is vital that the business community plan for these major changes and don't just wait for things to happen around them.

During the construction phase shoppers may find it difficult to park and shop at the Woolworths complex and may visit Coles or other independent businesses for their daily needs. This will result in new shopping patterns and is an opportunity for main street retailers to maximise revenue and build loyalty with those shoppers spending more time in the main street. Bega may also lose shoppers to surrounding areas, particularly if car spaces are lost for protracted periods during the construction work so there needs to be a strong shop local focus during this phase.

The construction workers themselves are also an opportunity to generate revenue particularly through foods and day to day services such as pharmacy, banking and newsagency.

Increasing the number of visitors who visit the main street

Bega is not a traditional tourist town but is located just 20 minutes from the popular beachside towns of the South Coast. It has a growing profile thanks to the ongoing advertising campaigns for Bega cheese and there is potential to increase promotion of Bega to South Coast visitors and travellers already stopping at the Heritage Centre.

Capitalising on Destination Visitors

The diverse range of destination businesses in the Bega is an opportunity for the broader business community. There is potential to promote these businesses

specifically and then cross promote the rest of the main street to the customers they attract.

Bega already has an excellent mix of businesses in several categories such as cafes, health and wellbeing and professional services.

Capitalising on the Retail Sector

Bega has a “hidden” target market in the business owners and employees who work in the town. There is potential to maximise revenue from local workers by encouraging them to spend their money where they work.

Target Markets

Target Markets for the Bega business community include:

Existing Residents

New Residents

Destination Visitors

Retail Staff

Tourists

Construction

Consolidation

There are usually two phases to marketing a business community. The initial phase is to consolidate the offering to the target market, 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.

Research

Informal Research

The Bega business community will find it easier to focus their marketing dollars and promotional activities if they are able to clearly identify their most profitable target markets.

There seems to be an assumption that Bega is a working class town with lots of residents on low income or benefits. But there is also some evidence of higher spending markets and newcomers to Bega and surrounding areas that do not necessarily fit this profile.

Sharing of information and research can be a valuable tool to help Bega businesses maximise their revenue.

As different businesses will have different opinions and information on specific market segments it makes sense to initially share information and discuss both population and tourism trends.

This exchange can be facilitated at an informal meeting which could be hosted by the Chamber. Interested business owners could discuss their observations and visitation trends for each of the target markets identified in this plan. Useful information would include results of any postcode data which has already been collected e.g. lay-bys in the browsing shops, mailing list or databases of destination, accommodation or tourism operators. Anecdotal information can also be gathered re average spend and visitation by local residents.

It is often useful to invite a local real estate agent or stock and station agent to the meeting to provide additional information on real estate trends in the area. Representatives from other groups such as Sapphire Coast Tourism and Combined Chambers may also be able to provide generic information about referrals to local businesses or traveller trends.

Hopefully this meeting can lead to more discussion amongst business owners about retail and product gaps in the town and some retailers may choose to test this market with ranges of different or higher priced product. This is not as risky a venture as it sounds as much of this product will also appeal to the visitor market.

This informal meeting also gives business owners an opportunity to meet as a group to network.

Formal Research

Information from the informal meeting can give indications of which markets would be the best to target with any future Chamber marketing initiatives. This can be quantified with more formal research.

Postcode Research

Although business owners and staff will know their regular locals they may not be aware of newcomers or visitors who are visiting their business.

It would be useful to identify the sources of revenue with simple postcode research (see appendix). It is recommended that postcode research be initially run for a four week period and postcode and \$\$ spend recorded in as many outlets as possible. To minimise disruption to trading, the research can be run for consecutive two hour periods each day. At the end of each week data is collated and at the end of the month each business owner would share the rankings of each postcode or market

segment with other operators. They would not share details about actual number of customers or average spend amounts but could rank postcodes or types of customer in terms of highest to lowest average spend. The research will generate data about locals and visitors that will enable the business community to quantify which geographic area or market segments have the highest average spend.

Café/ Pub/B&B

Venues where patrons are seated or spend more time can participate in postcode research but may also be able to play a key role collecting information on the reasons people visit Bega. During the four week research period these operators could also place small survey sheets on tables and collect results. (See appendix for sample questionnaire)

Retail Mix

Establishing a clear market position

In the short to medium term Bega needs to promote its retail mix and create a stronger positioning in relation to the surrounding centres such as Merimbula. This type of exercise usually calls for a regional branding expert but based on my brief visit there are three market positions that come to mind. "Choice", "For the Locals", "Health and wellbeing"

Choice

Bega's main strength is its strong retail mix, service providers and general focus on the local market. The new Woolworths development will add more retailers to the mix and provide more choice in some categories. This will make Bega more attractive to residents living on or closer to the coast who do not have access to the range of products and services they want.

For the Locals

Residents of coastal towns often feel that their retail community is predominantly focused on the visitor market and has higher prices for everyday items, especially in the summer months. The hassles of parking, hordes of tourists and lacklustre customer service can certainly drive shoppers inland. An example of this is Nambour on the Sunshine Coast which has successfully positioned itself as the friendly town for locals rather than try and compete with tourist hotspots such as Noosa and Maroochydore.

Health and Wellbeing

The excellent mix of mainstream and alternative health services is a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) for Bega that has the potential to be included in any market positioning

Attracting more "recreational" shoppers

Even though Bega will remain a service town, over time there will also be potential to add more businesses to the mix that would improve the browsing appeal of Bega main street and attract more recreational shoppers.

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 major centre with a large supermarket and a range of specialty stores (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 "specialisation" and "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 choice in their chosen category e.g. gifts, fashion, sports supplies or home wares, interesting stock and most importantly a range of eating options because lunch or coffee is an important part of the experience.

A large number of recreational shoppers travel in pairs or groups e.g. young mums catching up for coffee or mother and daughter outings or women catching up for a retail therapy session.

Depending on the results of the recommended research there may be potential for Bega to build its recreational retail mix around "green", alternative, environmental and health focused shoppers. Examples of this type of mix can be found in Kempsey and Lismore that both have groups of retailers stocking products ranging from organic clothing to new age crystals to wholefoods.

Tailoring the retail mix

In the short term there is little opportunity to tailor the retail mix in Bega as there are relatively few vacancies. At the time of the site visit the major vacancy was the Body Guard shop which would be ideal for a major retailer such as Rivers or Lowes. However it is believed that this site recently been leased to Horizon Credit Union.

In the medium term the new Woolworths Centre will be an opportunity for the Bega Chamber to become actively involved in tailoring the retail mix so it appeals to target markets.

New outlets in a major development are usually marketed by a leasing manager but there is often an opportunity for an organisation like the Chamber to liaise with the leasing manager to achieve the optimum retail mix. Leasing managers often find it is easier to "sell" their development if they have the support of the local business community.

Vacancies caused by the relocation of main street businesses will also be an opportunity for the Chamber to tailor the mix so it works for both new and existing businesses in Bega.

It is important to note that major players like Woolworths and Target undertake considerable research before deciding to invest in a town with new developments or expansion. The number of mooted developments for Bega would tend to indicate that their research shows there is significant potential in Bega and surrounding areas.

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

- ▶ Setting up a sub-committee to develop a hit list of businesses that will fill gaps and fit the future positioning of Bega
- ▶ Reviewing main street vacancies to identify properties as they become 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 and leasing manager 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 the Chambers 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 and office opportunities

It is important to note that many new businesses already have a "link" with the community they relocate to. This could be partners of people relocated to the area for work, family members in the area, people on holidays in the region or who happened

to visit the main street. 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 prospectus for the Chamber website. (This could also be promoted on the Council 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 local real estate agents windows
 - Using signs in the windows of any vacant shops to identify possible usages

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

- ▶ Approaching chains and franchises that would be ideal for the Bega mix to find out their criteria for new developments and gauge their interest
 - This would apply particularly to large main street vacancies such as the current Target Country site
 - It would be expected that the leasing manager will also market the new development to this market
- ▶ Approaching retailers such as menswear stores, in other regional communities who may wish to open a second store in Bega 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 deli 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 Victoria 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”.

Encouraging Traffic between Main Street and new Developments

During the construction phase it will be important to minimise any escape spending by locals. Difficult access and lack of parking both have the potential to drive locals to another town for their day to day shopping.

Access

Although infrastructure is not part of the brief for a Community Business Plan I feel that maintaining access between the new developments and Carp Street is critical for the main street retailers. It is possible that during the construction phase car parking areas may be closed or access to Ayers Walkway restricted. I would strongly recommend that the Bega Chamber actively lobby Council and the developers to ensure that access is maintained during construction and once the development is complete.

To maintain activity in the main street traffic it may be possible to relocate the produce markets during the construction phase to a central area such as Ayers Walkway.

Parking

It is also important to ensure that car parking is maintained during the development phase and spaces are not lost as a result of the new developments. Ease of parking in the main street will also become more important and the contentious tree guards may discourage locals from parking in the main street. It is recommended that Chamber liaise with developers and Council to minimise the impact

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. The lack of evening dining may 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 should try and work together to standardise opening days and hours. For instance in some communities tourist 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 summer and winter hours e.g. a beachside town may trade 6 days in winter and 7 days in peak times.

In the longer term it is likely that as the popularity of Bega grows and the new development 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". Initially weekend trading could be trialled during peak times such as spring and summer or introduced at the same time as the opening of the new development. 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 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 accommodation providers in target areas such as Merimbula
- ▶ Individual businesses should be encouraged to have their opening hours clearly visible. This is particularly relevant for food outlets.

Signage

There is a lack of under awning signage and poor above awning signage in some areas*. The streetscape 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.

*It should be noted that Council have actively discouraged above awning signage in the past

- ▶ Take 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
 - Businesses that have changed their name but not their sign
 - 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

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 from Council 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.

Town Colour Scheme

- ▶ There is an opportunity for the Chamber to work with council planners and heritage advisors to maximise the impact of Bega's retail architecture by developing a suggested range of town colours for owners and tenants who are considering painting their premises. This will help maintain the integrity of the streetscape and avoid jarring or inappropriate colour schemes in the future.

Streetscape

There is potential for Bega to improve its street appeal with locals, workers and people just passing through. 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 Bega. These "standards" could be attached to existing poles in the main streets. A series of flags could be used to promote all aspects of the town. Themes could include:
 - Chamber
 - Retail mix
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Primary industry
 - Cafes
 - Heritage
 - Local community
 - Art Gallery
- ▶ These flags could be supplemented or replaced with flags promoting key festivals and promotions during the year
- ▶ There is also potential to produce mini versions 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.
- ▶ Another way of making a strong impression is with distinctive "Bega" branded umbrellas and/or windbreaks around seating areas to indicate a food outlet.

These clumps of colour take the eye away from less attractive aspects of a main street and visually make a long street seem shorter.

- As some cafes are already using products supplied by coffee companies it would be advisable to ascertain support for this type of project before proceeding
- ▶ 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 any 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 health and wellbeing or our town
 - Display of local artists work with a local theme
 - Cross promotion of the Chamber and businesses in the main street
 - Photographic display

Window Displays

Window displays and store signage are vital to convince locals to stop and spend time. As they drive through town, A-Boards, store signage, bright stock displays in the front of store and window displays will convince them to stop and spend time in Bega.

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

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.

Website

Bega is fortunate to have a very active and successful chamber of commerce. There is potential for the Chamber to become the information givers for the local residents as well as the business community through their existing website. Recommendations include:

- ▶ Adding a comprehensive general business directory to the website which will improve search engine optimisation and drive more locals to the website. (see P 23)
- ▶ Adding a Development Update which includes practical information on the business developments in town and how they will affect locals (See P24)
 - Including information on parking and access
- ▶ Promoting the strength of the retail mix
 - Increasing the emphasis on health and wellbeing and services with a page dedicated to health specialists
 - Increasing the emphasis on the daytime food mix with a dedicated "Good eating" page
 - This could include cafes, restaurants, pubs and takeaways along with fresh food options such as wholefoods, award winning sausages etc

- Information could also include menus, opening hours and any reviews from local press
 - This can be done with a “launch pad” on the home page which links directly to services for the local market
- ▶ Promoting the diversification of businesses in the main street with a “Did You Know?” or “We’ve Got It All” section on the home page which rotates some of the interesting businesses in the main street
- ▶ Including PDF downloads of Bega marketing material e.g. Bega Heritage Walk or Bega Day In flyers
- ▶ Including SEO that will increase the Search Engine rankings for Bega
- ▶ The website can also become a valuable communication tool for Chamber Committee members and the local business community. In addition to providing access to meeting agendas, minutes and planning documents. There also may be potential to include
 - A calendar of events including ways of participating in the events
 - Details of groups visiting the area e.g. those visiting the art gallery
 - Details of new businesses or change of ownership
 - If time permits a monthly or quarterly Retail Newsletter could be added to the site and also emailed to the members database
 - Newsletters should be kept brief and those that include light hearted “gossip” and personal profiles often have a much higher readership. A small area could also be dedicated to information such as
 - Profiles on staff members or business owners
 - News of new outlets or changes to existing businesses
 - News of births marriages etc
 - Staff member of the month
 - Customer service accolades

Marketing Collateral

There is potential to upgrade some of the existing Bega marketing material and introduce new material that will relate directly to target markets. Suggestions include:

- ▶ Upgrading quality of existing Bega leaflet to include professional design and layout plus colour printing
- ▶ Upgrading Bega Heritage Walk flyer
- ▶ Creating marketing material for the Art Gallery
 - This may exist but wasn’t seen at time of site visit
- ▶ Developing a range of leaflets (Day In leaflets) to encourage more visitors into Bega main street
- ▶ Developing simple leaflets including
 - Health and Wellbeing Flyer
 - Website, Business Directory promotional flyer
 - While You are Here Flyer
 - Good Food @ Bega flyer

Marketing Strategies

The following strategies have been developed based on the Retail Review and key issues facing the Bega business community. They have not been prioritised and some will not be appropriate if others are adopted. 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

Promotions

Bega Chamber of Commerce has a great track record and flair when it comes to promotions and events. Over the years themed campaigns have been popular with retailers and locals alike. Shop local campaigns like the "Bega Buckets of Cash" Christmas promotion will be increasingly important tools to reduce local escape spending especially during the construction phase of the new developments.

Even though they are no longer able to close the main street and may be restricted by space it is strongly recommended that the Chamber continue with their annual major events and consider adding smaller events to keep the momentum going during the development phase. These are an opportunity for retailers to dress their windows, feature stock and trade outside their outlet for a day. The Chamber will no doubt be able to come up with creative and innovative concepts but examples that may work for Bega include:

- ▶ Health and Wellbeing expo where environmental, and green groups can set up displays in Ayers Walkway (or space adjacent to the main street). Windows can take on a green theme and relevant businesses can also promote services such as cholesterol testing, personal training, healthy foods etc. Cafes can also get involved with this type of promotion creating a healthy meal deal for the promotion
- ▶ Sports Saturday where retailers all deck out their shops in the local team colours and invite local football or sports stars to sign autographs or run sports clinics in the main street.
- ▶ Crazy Day with sales tables outside retail outlets, spruikers and super specials. Although this is a fairly standard promotion it can be dressed up with a theme e.g. Cheesy Crazy Day
- ▶ 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

Business Directory

A key piece of marketing material for the local market should be a comprehensive on line Business Directory. This drives local traffic to the website and increases the profile of the Chamber. Although time consuming to coordinate, these are invaluable as many residents often head out of town to shop for an item or service because they do not realise just what is available in their own town. Business Directories are also great marketing tools in towns where there are "part-time" contractors or residents.

For maximum impact the Business Directory should include all businesses including tourism operators, professional services, light industrial businesses and health professionals. Ideally it should be free to list but the Chamber can raise revenue through charging for including pictures, links to web pages or additional wording. (Some Chambers also create and charge for mini web pages which are set up as templates.)

The directory details should cover business name, address and contact details, including email. It is also a good idea to include the business owners name and a 50

– 100 word description of the services offered. Ideally the directory would be set up on the website and contributors allowed to enter their own information.

The directory can appear on the Chamber website as simple PDF document or through a more sophisticated “search” function. The directory can also be linked to Shire Council or tourism sites. An on-line directory has significant benefits over traditional printed business guides:

- ▶ It is cheaper to produce as there are no printing costs
- ▶ It can be downloaded and printed by users if required
- ▶ It can be kept up to date easily and changed monthly
- ▶ It is easy to access by anyone at anytime
- ▶ It can link directly to individual business websites which provide even more information

The information included in the Business Directory will also assist the Search Engine rankings for the Chamber.

Development Information

There is a great opportunity for the Chamber to become the local “information” givers for the local residents during the development phase. It is likely that there will be plenty of rumours and speculation about what will and won’t happen during the development of Woolworths and Target sites. Some of this may lead to assumptions that it will be too difficult to shop in town and locals will head to Merimbula or other centres for their weekly shop.

It is recommended that the Chamber create a campaign name that can cover a range of promotional activities and services designed to keep locals informed and shopping in town during the planned developments. (See P28 for more details).

The Chamber (along with the local paper) can also play a significant role in keeping locals shopping in town by providing update information. An example of this is Coffs Harbour Streets Ahead committee which set up a shop front campaign office during the redevelopment of their mall in 2002. With the assistance of the local council they employed two customer service people to answer locals questions, act as a directory board and support the retail community.

This approach would be too expensive for a voluntary group but a similar approach could be taken on the website. Setting up a home page information link which is updated on a regular basis would give locals accurate information on the development, parking etc as well as details of upcoming promotions and events.

The group in Coffs Harbour found that the developers were very supportive of this initiative as it provided them with easy access to the community. It may be worthwhile approaching the developers to see if they are willing to part fund the alterations to the website.

Marketing the Website

Promotional campaigns, business directory and changes to the website give the Chamber and main street businesses a reason to promote directly to the local community. Options include:

- ▶ A postcard drop to the local postcode including surrounding areas
- ▶ The postcard could promote the business directory and a special offer from food retailers to encourage them to log on to the website

In addition to advertising there is also potential to promote the website and business directory in the main street. This can be done through:

- ▶ Handout of postcards or promotional flyers during peak period in the main street
- ▶ 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 all future marketing collateral e.g. Day In leaflets, Health and Wellbeing flyers, Have a coffee on us flyers, banners, flags or decals (stickers)

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 and local businesses community
 - In some communities the local Council are happy to include materials and subsidises the cost of the packs
- ▶ Links to the business directory and chamber website
- ▶ Events and festival directory
- ▶ 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, or when the factory shop at Bega Cheese is open to information about favourite parks or alternate health practitioners
 - 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 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 Chamber

Destination Visitors

Increasing Cross Promotion of Destination Businesses

A diverse range of shops in the main street will attract destination shoppers. It is likely that some of these businesses have established mail lists and will blog, send e-newsletters or mail outs to their customers. In some regional communities a number of likeminded 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 develop a home makeover guide which they each emailed to their client database. 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

The success of this strategy very much depends on how willing businesses are to work together.

Increasing Awareness of Health and Wellbeing Businesses

Bega has an excellent retail mix in the health and wellbeing category. This is unusual in a town this size. Optometrists, medical practitioners, specialists, X-ray and pathology providers and physiotherapists are all represented. There are also supporting retail outlets such as pharmacies located in the main street.

There is potential to “brand” and promote these outlets to locals.

Recommended strategies include:

- ▶ Identify businesses with a flag or pennant which is colour coded for health and wellbeing. These can be supplemented with smaller stick on signs which can be added to existing signage, displayed in office windows or added to foyer signage.

This will create additional colour in the streetscape and improve visibility for health providers.

- This flag should include a positioning statement which is a variation on the overall positioning for the Bega business community
- ▶ Develop a Health and Wellbeing flyer which details all health and wellbeing services in the area along with other useful information e.g. disabled parking spots, florists, cafés with wheelchair access etc.
 - The flyer should also include a map of health services in the CBD area
 - This can be distributed through the hospitals and all health practices
 - If funds permit it can also be letterbox dropped to local postcodes

Increasing length of stay

Bega's medical practitioners, specialists and general health professionals will see thousands of patients over a year and many of those will also visit the area with friends, relatives or carers. There are also a high number of professional practices and service businesses that attract people to Bega.

There is potential to increase their length of stay and average spend with a DL flyer or postcard displayed in professional or health practices.

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 e.g. Town Walk.

There is also an opportunity to get individual cafes involved with promotions to these visitors. Professional or health 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 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 Bega.

Good Food @ Bega

There is potential to promote the strong mix of cafes, restaurants, clubs, pubs and fresh food outlet with a flyer which would be distributed through retail outlets

Business owners and retail staff

A great way to kick start the marketing of Bega is to create a sense of community amongst the local retailers. A marketing program to encourage retail staff to spend in the town can be a good way of opening up communication channels and overcoming possible complacency about the changing markets in Bega.

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 consultation at 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.

Tourists

Although Bega is not a traditional tourism market there is potential to "pull" more visitors into town from the Heritage Centre and surrounding towns with marketing material that can be distributed through the VIC at the Heritage Centre, Sapphire Tourism and accommodation providers in surrounding towns. The Bega brochure currently distributed through the Heritage Centre could be adapted to become a range of "Day In" flyers.

- ▶ "Day In" flyers are an easy concept that links together retail, food and tourism activities. These leaflets provide suggested itineraries based on the length of time a visitor has in town e.g. "Bega Stop Over", "Relax and Revive", "Shop till you Drop" "Food worth stopping for". Using this format it is easy to include a range of activities for example:
 - Breakfast in a café
 - A visit to the Arts Centre
 - Fresh produce and wholefoods
 - A hearty pub lunch
 - Fashion shopping
 - Heritage walk
- ▶ 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, Grandma comes to stay. "Visiting the Family".

The accommodation and tourism businesses in Merimbula and Pambula may also have a major impact on the successful marketing of Bega. There is potential to boost business by actively promoting the food and browsing mix to accommodation providers in coastal towns 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 Bega were interested in this type of program the Chamber could partner with the Art Gallery and Heritage Centre

Development Projects

The planned development of the Woolworths site, Target and town bypass will all have a major impact on the business community of Bega and bring both opportunities and challenges. The Chamber can help local businesses minimise risks and capitalise on opportunities.

Setting Expectations for the Business Community, Skills Development

In many regional communities facing these kinds of changes there is a temptation for business owners to either put their head in the sand and pretend it's not happening or be overly pessimistic. It is important that local business owners have realistic expectations and start to plan for changes sooner rather than later. There are a number of initiatives the Chamber can introduce to support the business community. Suggestions include:

- ▶ Prior to the start of works
 - A seminar for local business owners to give them realistic information on what to expect re loss of business from the main street once development is completed
 - Dr Kim Houghton of Economic Solutions in Canberra (02 6262 6234) and I have presented workshops around this topic or I could help you source an expert in this topic
 - The Chamber to host a facilitated meeting to discuss opportunities for the main street whilst the development is underway and longer term strategies for individual businesses e.g. building up product areas not likely to be affected by the development
- ▶ Prior to completion
 - Practical workshops for business owners on issues such as window display, merchandising, financial management and marketing
 - Ideally these would be followed by one on one sessions for individual business owners. (These type of programs are often funded or part funded by DSRD)
 - I present a number of these each year in regional towns with topics including Winning the Marketing War, Tricks of the Trade for Retailers, Image and Branding – Make Your Mark and Retail Survival – thriving in tough times. They usually consist of a 1.5 hour workshop followed by 5 one on one sessions the following day.
 - Bring in advisors who can assist businesses with financial performance and cash flow issues. David Pallas of D & J Business Support Services in Wollongong (02) 4284-0511 and Tracey Collins of Project National in Ulladulla (0431 471 133) are both well respected and experienced consultants in this field. Tracey is also an experienced keynote speaker and runs workshops on financial management for small business.
 - It is important that advisors in the financial field are not locals

Capitalising on Opportunities from the Development

Once the projects are given the go ahead the business community will benefit from taking a group approach to negotiating, capitalising on opportunities and coping with challenges. The Bega Chamber already has a track record for lobbying in the interests of the business community and it would be logical for the group to continue to take this role during the development phase. In addition to lobbying the Chamber can also promote available services to on site employers and liaise with developers re parking, access, progress of the project and retail mix.

There is also potential for the Chamber to develop a "campaign" to tie together all their activities during this period. Operating under a project name can be very motivational for both the business and local community. Examples of project names include:

- ▶ Lismore Unlimited
- ▶ Growing Inverell
- ▶ Nambour Futures
- ▶ Coffs Streets Ahead
- ▶ Karuah Working Together
- ▶ Lifestyle Dookie

Any logos or positioning statements developed for the campaign could be used on:

- ▶ Flags
- ▶ A Boards
- ▶ Individual retail outlets – flags, window strips or decals
- ▶ Vacant shop windows
- ▶ Any new Marketing material e.g.
 - “Day in” brochures that could increase length of stay and cross promote individual businesses

Marketing to Developers

The first step is to form a subcommittee to represent the local business community. The group should identify the key decision makers within the Companies for each at each phase of the development process and where possible establish contact with the decision makers to let them know that there is an active Chamber in the town.

The group should then develop a product offering for each stage of the project e.g.

- ▶ Contractors available for subcontract work e.g. local trades
- ▶ Accommodation available for consultants
- ▶ Accommodation available for work teams
- ▶ Town services available for work teams e.g. pharmacy, health services, post office, work gear
- ▶ Evening meal options for consultants
- ▶ Breakfast and lunch options for work teams
 - This could include a snack truck or on site delivery service from existing outlets

Once the project is in full swing there will be opportunities to market directly with on site companies and aim to pull workers into the main street.

Marketing to Contractors

The Chamber or Council Economic Development Officer may be able to liaise with developers 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, Bega could produce "Honorary Local" cards which encourage repeat visits and entitle local employees to different bonuses e.g. Buy 5 coffees and the 6th is free.

Marketing Initiatives Summary

To assist the Chamber with implementation the following is a prioritised list of initiatives recommended in the plan. Please note that the priority of these items may change depending on the progress of the development and needs of local businesses.

- ▶ Short Term
 - Chamber program name, positioning and logo
 - Search Engine Optimisation of Chamber website
 - Additions to website e.g. development update
 - Postcode research
 - Café research
 - Lobbying re traffic flow, access, parking
 - Signage review
 - Colour scheme
 - Skills Development workshops e.g. Visual Merchandising
 - Marketing collateral to increase length of stay e.g. Good Food @ Bega, While You are Here Flyer
 - Marketing collateral to pull tourists into town e.g. "Day In Flyers"
 - Business owners and retail staff promotion
 - Marketing to developers
- ▶ Medium Term
 - Business Directory
 - Additions to website e.g. Business Directory, events calendar etc
 - Marketing website (could be short term depending on changes made)
 - Retail Mix – vacancy program
 - Streetscape, visibility – flags/A boards etc
 - Branding and marketing of Health and Wellbeing businesses
 - New resident pack
 - Marketing program for contractors
- ▶ Longer term
 - Weekend trading
- ▶ Ongoing
 - Upgrade marketing collateral
 - Promotions and events