



BRUNSWICK HEADS BUSINESS SURVEY SUMMARY 2015

Brunswick Heads. Chamber of Commerce.



Our mission: *To foster a dynamic local business sector encouraging sustainable and innovative development in line with the community's vision for Brunswick Heads.*

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The fifth Brunswick Heads Business Survey was undertaken by the Brunswick Heads Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) in November 2015. The Survey is one of the many initiatives undertaken every 3 years by the 90 strong member based Chamber. The survey was conducted in-house by former Chamber Admin Assistant, Steven Andrews, and Executive Committee member, Kim Rosen.

Participation by 72 businesses (a response rate of just under 70%) this year meant lots of data, and meaningful findings. The Business Survey Report provides the community with invaluable qualitative and quantitative data for application in three main areas.

1. The survey is a useful and practical tool for tracking the economic health of Brunswick Heads over several years and for evaluating the success of the economic renewal strategies and projects that have been implemented by the Chamber, its subcommittees and taskforces over the last 3 years.
2. The survey presents a 2015 "snapshot" of the Brunswick business sector, with very useful data and material for use by:
 - Members
 - New or prospective new businesses
 - Chamber
 - Byron Shire Council
 - Grant bodies
3. The survey provides an opportunity for the business community to give feedback on all aspects of doing business in the town. The aggregated ratings, identified issues and suggestions for improvement to the business and town environment can be used to effect change and will provide the Chamber with direction and input for strategic planning for the future and for use in funding applications and submissions.

With no funding assistance again this year from government or Council sources, implementation of the project work was only possible with cash and in-kind sponsorship from the following businesses and considerable voluntary consulting work for implementing the analysis, report and presentation.

2015 SURVEY SPONSORS



OVERVIEW

In the last three years the Chamber, its taskforces and subcommittees have been busy following up recommendations from the 2012 Business Survey. The 2015 survey confirms that the Chamber's work and effort has been effective and the various strategies have had a positive impact on the town and its business sector.

The extensive list of achievements since 2012 include; the expansion of Visitor Centre services; town promotion, with a new mobile and tablet friendly website, a Weddings and Events Bureau, targeted brochures discount voucher booklet and the dispersal of Byron Bay visitors to Brunswick, growth of Mullum2Bruns Paddle & award winning Old & Gold Festival, construction of two seats along Tweed St and progress on the Masterplan, and the introduction of Customer Service Awards.

The range of shops and services in Brunswick is incredible for a town of its size. A significant influx of new businesses in the last five years has brought fresh energy, ideas and a slightly hipster style to complement the existing range of enterprises. The cluster of interesting and destination secondhand shops has strengthened, new cafes and restaurants have opened up to complement the already strong hospitality sector and recreation and eco-friendly tourism businesses have increased in number.

Brunswick Heads remains a tourism dependent town. December, January & April are still the best trading months but February has dipped since 2012. There were no adverse economic or weather events during this period for business to contend with. Staff levels, demand and turnover all increased just as businesses predicted it would back in 2012. However, some staff shortages have been experienced. Many of our businesses are small or owner operated businesses, and while there is interest in improving their business management skills (especially balancing work and life, marketing and social media) they are time poor. So one-on-one mentoring, short workshops and newsletters are the preferred way of learning.

In general, businesses are happier with Council than in past surveys, but they still want more infrastructure action, especially on toilets, roads and parking. There is still overwhelming opposition to paid parking.

The economic outlook is promising, with most expecting to increase their turnover and about a third of businesses expecting to take on more staff. The top priorities for businesses for the Chamber's next strategic plan remain almost unchanged – town promotion, visitor services, streetscaping and the Tweed St upgrade. Businesses also shared their ideas for low key development of the Boatharbour. The laid back village character & lifestyle and Simple Pleasures brand is still highly prized but ongoing reinforcement of our message may be needed.

BRUNSWICK BUSINESS PROFILE

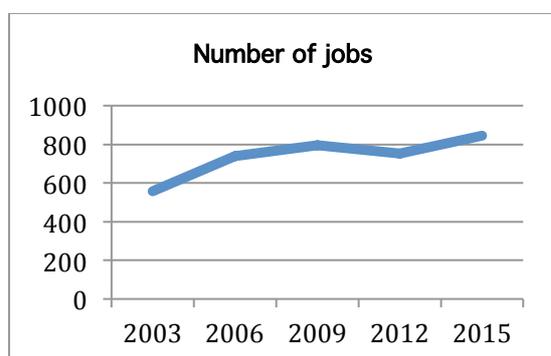
- Almost half the businesses (46.4%) were established in Brunswick in the last 5 years, with 10.1% starting up this year. 3 businesses are 68, 75 & 86 years old!
- For the last 2 or 3 years the commercial vacancy rate has been under 2%.
- Brunswick has no industrial base but an engineering company and 3 small manufacturing businesses.
- Brunswick has an excellent (and growing) number of professional & employment businesses for its size.
- Apart from tourism accommodation, retail is the most common type of business, followed by hospitality, then professional and health & wellbeing.
- The number and range of recreation businesses and health and well-being businesses has increased.
- The retail sector is made up of many interesting and eclectic little shops, contributing to Brunswick's village charm. Many have diversified, and now sell a wide range of products.
- Several new cafes & restaurants have opened since 2012, including a few fine-dining options, with new fit outs and thirty something owners with new styles.
- The secondhand businesses cluster has strengthened with new destination businesses. These complement the eateries (now up to 27).

DOING BUSINESS IN BRUNSWICK HEADS

- As a place to do business, businesses rate Brunswick Heads on average as 7.6 out of 10.
- 73.6% rate it as good or excellent while 39% rate it as excellent (only 1 business rated it as very poor).
- The location close to the highway & airport is valued.
- December & January remain the best trading months, with good trading from September to April. June & July remain the worst trading months. However, February has dipped and needs attention.
- Brunswick is a tourist dependent town, and more so since 2009. 91.4% of businesses surveyed rely on tourists (an increase since 2009). For 57% of businesses, tourism makes up half or more of their trade and for 21.4% of those surveyed, tourism provides 80% or more of their income. (Even higher if the 50 or so holiday lets with 100% tourism reliance are included). Fortunately there have been no major economic set backs or serious weather events adversely affecting tourism since 2012.
- Recycling & waste disposal services have improved.

EMPLOYMENT

- Brunswick has many "small" businesses – 23.6% are sole traders (highest ever), 36.1% employ 2-4 staff (up from 2009), 36.1% employ 5-9 staff (lowest ever) There has been a growth in our large businesses - 20.8% now employ 10 or more staff (up from 2009).
- The 72 who responded employ 428 staff between them. (Average of 5.95 people per business). With 142 businesses, this extrapolates to 845 jobs in the town. This is a 12.2% increase since 2012!



- 30.6% jobs are full-time, 18% part-time and 51.4% casual. In the last 2 years there has been a 10.5% net drop in full-time staff, 8.2% net increase in part-time staff and 8.4% net increase in casual staff.
- 26.5% have difficulty finding suitable employees, esp chefs, but only 7.2% have difficulty retaining them.

BUSINESS PLANNING AND SUPPORT

- Price, followed by range & availability are considered to be the barriers to customers buying locally. There are quite a few products that our businesses source outside the area but would like to source locally.
- More than half of businesses (59.2%) are confident that their businesses will grow in the next 2 years, with about a third expecting to take on more staff.
- Businesses identify work/life balance, marketing and social media as the business management skills most in need of improvement.
- Preferred methods of delivery of training/information are 2-3 hour workshops, mentoring and newsletters.
- Businesses prefer working co-operatively through work/client referrals & co-operative marketing.
- Businesses want the Chamber to continue all services.

CONCERNS

- The greatest levels of dissatisfaction with services & infrastructure are with the DA process and availability of warehousing, although these ratings have improved marginally since 2012. The internet comes in next, a big change for the worse since 2012.
- The highest costs of doing business in Brunswick are DA approvals, energy, transportation, then rates.
- There is an expectation that Council should spend more on infrastructure than it does - on improvements to toilets, roads, traffic, more parking, signage, streetscaping & Tweed St. Businesses believe these actions, amongst others, will help the economy grow.
- No over-development, just sensible development
- 92.2% of businesses are opposed to paid parking.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Maintain our village charm and the Simple Pleasures activities, and reinforce our branding and mission.
- Run or support compatible community events.
- Maintain the vibrant Visitor Centre and support their projects eg the Mullum2Bruns Paddle & Green Frog.
- Improve visitor amenities including wi-fi and transport
- Continue town promotion through the town website, social media and co-operative marketing, embracing the demographic of new businesses and their style.
- Run a new activity in February to provide a "spike".
- More streetscaping and beautification.
- Advance the Tweed St upgrade.
- Engage with Council to encourage a variety of infrastructure improvements - public toilets, roads etc.
- Work with Council to resolve various parking issues, in ways other than paid parking.
- Develop more mechanisms & opportunities for cross referrals between businesses.
- Engage with our employment businesses to help resolve employment shortages, and provide skills training, mentoring and short workshops.
- Engage in the boatharbour master planning process.
- Continue Chamber activities (VC, marketing, website, town improvement, business development, advocacy, events, partnering with other organisations).
- Involve more businesses in the committees, running events & fundraising and manage & streamline our limited resources to achieve as much as possible.