



Lismore Business
Promotion Program
Business Plan
2016-2018

bpp

lismore

Contents



1: Executive Summary	3	Events + Placemaking	8
Introduction	3	Major Events	8
Program Vision	3	Future Events	9
Business Plan Objective	3	Placemaking Initiatives	9
Marketing	3	Power for Events and Placemaking	10
Events + Placemaking	4	The Quadrangle	10
Business	5	City Centre Markets	10
Budget	5	Business	10
KPIs and Final Review	5	Business Training + Development	10
<hr/>			
2: Program Components	6	3: Objectives, Funding + Governance	11
Marketing	6	Program Vision	11
Branding	6	Business Plan Objectives	11
Advertising	6	Funding	11
Digital Marketing	6	Governance	11
Social Media	7	Key Performance Indicators	12
Ongoing Promotions	7		
Customer Loyalty Program	7	4: Program Reviews + Findings	13
Sponsorship	7	2016 Review - DSA Consulting	13
Sporting Events	7	2012 Review - SCU School Of Business	13
Public Relations	8	Common Review Findings	13
Communications	8	Next Formal Review	14
		Further Information	14

1. Executive Summary



Introduction

The Lismore Business Promotion Program is administered by Lismore City Council and governed by the Lismore Business Panel. It has been funded by a Special Business Rate Variation Levy (SBRVL) applied to business ratepayers in the Lismore Outer Urban Area including the CBD since 1998. In 2013, the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal approved an Additional SBRVL to increase the level of promotional funding for the Program, which has generated an extra \$100,000 per year for a period of five years.

This Business Plan is designed to cover the final two years' Additional SBRVL funding (2016-2018), reflected in the Budget at the end of this Executive Summary. Further information on the SBRVL is contained within section 3 of this business plan - Objectives, Funding + Governance. The Business Plan also reflects the outcomes and recommendations of two successive reviews of the Program, in 2012 and 2016, covered in more detail in section 4 - Program Reviews + Findings.

Program Vision

The Lismore Business Promotion Program's vision is that "Lismore is a welcoming hub for business, community and visitors alike. Our City Centre is integral to our economy, cultural aspects and community and through a unified approach, Lismore will be a vibrant destination for everyone to enjoy."

Business Plan Objective

The primary objective of this 2016-2018 Business Plan is to improve and expand the Lismore City Centre revitalisation process and enable businesses in the CBD and Lismore Outer Urban Area to benefit from promotional activities contained in the Plan.

Marketing

Increased adoption and use of the successful 'Lismore-come to the heart' (CTTH) brand by businesses will be undertaken on an ongoing basis from mid-2016 onwards, and a brand audit will be undertaken in early 2017 to assess its ongoing relevance and market impact.

A new television commercial and associated marketing collateral will be produced in 2016 to reinforce the city's role as the business 'heart of the Northern Rivers' in a series of advertising campaigns throughout the next two years. There will be an increase in advertising to out of region markets such as South East Queensland and the NSW Mid-North Coast.

Expanded digital marketing will enable the Program to reach and then interact with customers online through digital channels such as the web, mobile devices, social media and interactive billboards. The CTTH website will be revamped, a smart phone app developed for the city centre and emphasis will be placed on improving search engine optimisation to help build online presence and to promote key events and campaigns throughout 2016-2018.

1. Executive Summary .../2



As well, the Program will increase the level of content provided across all relevant social media platforms - Facebook in particular - via both paid and non-paid activities.

In 2017, a new Lismore consumer loyalty program will be introduced; based on a “shop local” approach providing rewards for customers’ patronage. In addition to the major annual retail promotions, the City Centre Manager (CCM) will continue to devise and coordinate smaller but no less effective promotions throughout the two years. This promotional activity will include participation opportunities for all Lismore businesses.

During the two year period 2016-2018 the Program will continue to identify and secure potential sources of cash and in-kind sponsorship, with a target of \$75,000-\$100,000.

The CCM will work closely with Council’s media coordinator plus Lismore+Nimbin Tourism to generate media coverage of CBD activities year round and also create new media opportunities which generate interest in Lismore’s commercial sector. Improved communications between the Panel and key stakeholders will result from the distribution of printed and electronic bi-monthly bulletins describing forthcoming promotional activity and co-operative opportunities to all businesses in Lismore during 2016-2018, plus ongoing public relations activities.



Events and Placemaking

The Panel has reviewed and tightened the criteria for supporting major events, agreeing to fund only those signature events that can deliver more direct benefits to businesses in the CBD. The Panel has also endorsed providing financial support to help establish new events which could be either coordinated by the CCM or be externally managed. These new events could include a family-oriented and alcohol-free New Year’s Eve concert, a major music festival, events aimed at young people, film and comedy festivals and an Australia Day Celebration.

Over the next two years the Panel will consider funding a range of proposed projects aimed at enhancing the amenity of the CBD and creating an attractive sense of ‘place’. These projects include the progressive installation of fairy and other lights around the CBD, installing free consumer Wi-Fi facilities throughout the CBD, creating walking tours, improving signage for shoppers, activating key spaces in the city centre such as laneways and vacant premises, whilst encouraging ‘pop up’ activities and events like the high profile ‘bicycles Christmas tree’ in Keen Street.

1. Executive Summary .../3



Business

The Business Improvement Program (BIP) introduced in 2015 to assist owners and managers to enhance the growth and success of their individual operations will continue in 2016 and thereafter, with increased funding. The BIP is a partnership between the Panel and the Lismore Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In addition to business training and development, the Program will introduce co-operative marketing campaigns that businesses can “buy into” and implement a new ‘buy local’ Consumer Loyalty and Rewards Program that stimulates more consumers to shop in Lismore.

KPIs and Final Review

A more rigorous system of Key Performance Indicators has been instituted for the next two years, with desirable targets and achievable outcomes linked to factors such as timing, percentage increases in attendance or market share, and the record of digital transactions, for example.

The current five year Additional SBRVL funding round will end on June 30, 2018. A third and final review of the Program’s operations during the next two years will be held in late 2017.



Budget

2016-2017 FINANCIAL YEAR

TOTAL INCOME **\$358,000.00**

Including Estimated Additional SBRVL (Year 4 of 5) amount of \$113,500

EXPENDITURE

Marketing	95,000.00
Events + Placemaking	90,000.00
Business	50,000.00
Contingency	15,000.00
CCM Coordination + Overheads	108,000.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURE **\$358,000.00**

2017-2018 FINANCIAL YEAR

TOTAL INCOME **\$365,200.00**

Including Estimated Additional SBRVL (Year 5 of 5) amount of \$115,800

EXPENDITURE

Marketing	100,200.00
Events + Placemaking	90,000.00
Business	50,000.00
Contingency	15,000.00
CCM Coordination + Overheads	110,000.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURE **\$365,200.00**

2. Program Components



Many of the program components proposed for the period 2016-2018 are a continuation of proven elements contained within preceding business plans. Several new initiatives are listed as well.

MARKETING

In addition to paid-for advertising, the following marketing components are integral to promoting the city effectively.

Branding

The 'Lismore - come to the heart' brand (CTTH) has proven to be extremely successful, with awareness of the brand high among the public and business sectors, plus media. Now in its 7th year, the brand and related marketing collateral has been refreshed at successive stages to maintain its relevance. However, whilst the actual take-up by business has improved somewhat (assisted by the introduction of clear CTTH Brand and Style Guidelines) more can be achieved in this area.

Increased adoption and use of the CTTH brand by businesses will be undertaken on an ongoing basis from mid-2016 onwards, and a brand audit will be undertaken in early 2017 to assess its ongoing relevance and market impact.

Advertising

A new television commercial (TVC) and associated marketing collateral will be produced in 2016 to reinforce the city's role as the business 'heart of the Northern Rivers' in a series of advertising campaigns spanning the next two years. The TVC will be adapted for major events. The first campaign will roll out in September 2016 and include an increase in advertising in out of region markets such as South East Queensland and the NSW Mid-North Coast.

Regular press advertising in print media covering the Northern Rivers will highlight the range of unique business services Lismore has to offer and reinforce its role as the regional hub. Contributions from the business sector will be sought to enhance the co-operative marketing budget.

Digital Marketing

Expanded digital marketing will enable the Lismore business promotion program to reach and then interact with customers online through digital channels such as the web, mobile devices, social media and interactive billboards.

The existing 'come to the heart' website will be revamped in 2016 and become an integral part of a new and extensive "Live, Work and Play in Lismore" site encompassing the operations of the business promotions program, tourism, events and economic development.

2. Program Components .../2



The “Live, Work and Play” site will actively seek and assist new residents and businesses to relocate to the city. Emphasis will be placed on improving search engine optimisation to help build our online presence and to promote key events and campaigns throughout 2016-2018.

In addition to the website a smart phone ‘app’ will be developed which could include maps and information on businesses and facilities in the CBD. As part of the digital strategy, mobile phone marketing will be incorporated into the communication mix.

Social Media

Over the next two years the Program will increase the level of content provided across all relevant social platforms - Facebook in particular - via both paid and non-paid activities. (It is recommended that the City Centre Program and Tourism merge their social platforms to eliminate market confusion.)

Ongoing Promotions

In addition to the major annual retail promotions, the CCM will continue to devise and coordinate smaller but no less effective promotions throughout the year. This promotional activity will include participation opportunities for all Lismore businesses.

Customer Loyalty Program

A new Lismore Customer Loyalty Program will be based on a “shop local” approach providing rewards for customers’ patronage. The development of this customer loyalty program will be investigated and fully costed in early 2016 and rolled out before the end of the year.

Sponsorship

During 2016-2018 the Program will continue to identify and secure potential sources of cash and in-kind sponsorship, and align the CTTH brand with relevant special events, businesses and organisations that stand to gain significant direct and in-direct benefits from such sponsorships.

Sporting Events

Lismore is particularly well endowed with sporting facilities and Council’s Events Unit has proved to be extremely accomplished at securing major sporting tournaments of every kind to be held right across the LGA as well as the city centre. The Program will continue to value-add to all major sporting events (such as the Masters’ Games) in order to maximise returns to our local businesses.

2. Program components .../3



Public Relations

Public Relations activity generates exposure for the Lismore city centre, at minimal cost. The CCM will work closely with Council's media coordinator and Lismore Tourism to generate media coverage of CBD's mix of retail, business, major events, arts and cultural offerings year round. The CCM will also work to create new media opportunities that are not directly attached to an event or advertising campaign, but which reinforce the brand and generate interest in Lismore's commercial sector.



Communications

To improve communications between the Program, Panel and business sector, printed and electronic bi-monthly bulletins describing forthcoming promotions and co-operative opportunities will be distributed to all businesses in Lismore during 2016-2018.

These bulletins – with a working title of 'CBD Pulse' – will replace the former cBd magazine.

EVENTS + PLACEMAKING

Events and Placemaking work together to provide a dynamic city centre and give the Lismore CBD a competitive edge.

Major Events

The Program has funded annual iconic and major events in Lismore for many years. In 2015 the Panel reviewed the criteria for supporting such major events. The review sought to identify and sponsor only those signature events that can match stricter criteria, including more direct benefits to business and being located in the CBD. The Panel decided to reduce not only the number of events it contributes funds to but also to reduce concurrent sponsorship support for long-established events in 2016-2018 and focus on developing CCM initiated events eg: **"Eat the Street"**.

The Panel acknowledges that the external signature events are currently:

- Lismore Lantern Parade
- Christmas Carols concert
- Masters Games

2. Program components .../4



Future Events

The Panel has also endorsed providing financial support to help establish new events which could be either coordinated by the CCM or be externally managed. There is a positive opportunity to develop a range of new events in Lismore that not only are community focussed but have the potential to attract specific demographic markets to the city. These events include (but are not limited to):

- a family-oriented and alcohol-free New Year's Eve concert
- a major music festival
- a youth music event or "Kids Life" carnival
- a film festival and/or comedy festival
- an Australia Day celebration

The CCM will provide the Panel with scoping studies of such potential events for adoption and continue to work closely with Council's Tourism and Events units to achieve a critical mass of quality events and promotions which will fulfil local community and visitor needs, year round.

Placemaking Initiatives

Over the next two years the Panel will consider a range of proposed projects aimed at enhancing the amenity of the CBD and creating an attractive sense of 'place' and then fund those selected. These include:

- Progressive installation of fairy and other lights around the CBD to improve night time ambience for diners and patrons attending evening events
- Instituting historical and social "walking tours" of the city centre, laneways and arcades
- Improving signage to direct pedestrians to key CBD destinations
- Installing free consumer Wi-Fi facilities throughout the CBD in strategic locations, in partnership with Council and Telstra
- Continuing to encourage and assist the activation of spaces in the CBD with currently little or no 'life' (including vacant retail premises and the laneways) with small-scale special events and short term pop-up elements such as the 2015 bicycle Christmas tree display
- Identifying a section of the laneway network that could become a shared pedestrian zone, and host a café, performance space and other uses attractive to consumers.

2. Program components .../5



Power for Events and Placemaking

To date, Magellan and Carrington Streets have been provided with single and three-phase power outlets. In the period 2016-2018 provision has been made to continue installing power outlets to service promotional and special events in the three streets in The Block that have not yet been upgraded (Keen, Woodlark and Molesworth) plus the Back Alley Gallery.

The Quadrangle Project

The relocation of the Lismore Regional Gallery to a brand new \$5.85m complex in the former 'C' Block building adjacent to the Library and Conservatorium will finally provide the CBD with a piazza or town square, to be called The Quadrangle. This open space in front of the gallery will provide opportunities for concerts, events and promotional activities of every kind and the construction of this major new cultural facility will also generate significant additional visitor expenditure within the CBD.

City Centre markets

The Lismore Produce Market received assistance from the Program in its start-up mode, but has been financially self-sufficient since April 2011 and pays a nominal weekly fee to Council for electricity and the use of the site in Magellan Street. The Produce Market has integrity and personifies the 'buy local' ethos. It has proved to be a popular attraction, bringing extra numbers to the CBD each week, and could readily transfer to The Quadrangle site in late 2017. Potential exists for other kinds of markets to use the new space as well.

BUSINESS

Business Training and Development

In 2015, the Lismore Business Panel and the Lismore Chamber of Commerce + Industry commenced a Business Improvement Program to assist businesses enhance their business. \$10,000 was contributed from the Program. The Business Improvement Program was designed to give operators and key staff the knowledge and tools to identify and eliminate weaknesses in their business and show them how to improve their overall business performance.

In the 2016 financial year and beyond an increase in funding will be quarantined to consolidate this important project and increase participation by businesses in Lismore.



3. Objectives, Funding + Governance



Program Vision

“Lismore is a welcoming hub for business, community and visitors alike. Our City Centre is integral to our economy, cultural aspects and community and through a unified approach, Lismore will be a vibrant destination for everyone to enjoy.”

Business Plan Objective

To improve and expand the Lismore City Centre revitalisation process and enable businesses in the CBD and Lismore Outer Urban Area to benefit from promotional activities contained in the Plan.



Funding

The Program has been funded by a Special Business Rate Variation Levy (SBRVL) applied to business ratepayers in the Lismore Outer Urban Area (including the CBD) since 1998. In 2013, the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) approved an Additional SBRVL to increase the level of promotional funding for the Program, which has generated an extra \$100,000 per year for a period of five years. This Business Plan is designed to cover the final two years’ Additional SBRVL funding (2016-2018).

Governance

The Program, now in its seventh year, is governed by the twelve-member Lismore Business Panel and actioned by the Lismore City Centre Manager. The City Centre Manager is an employee of Council; reporting to the Executive Director, Sustainable Development (EDSD), who provides

oversight and direction on operational matters.

The EDSD completes the CCM’s annual performance appraisal with input from the Panel. The CCM’S employment and on-costs are paid for out of the special business rate.

The CCM is delegated to implement the Business Plan and expend the approved Budget (Page 5) (once it is endorsed by the Panel and adopted by Council), overseen by the EDSD with support from the Council’s Finance Manager. Program expenditures are rate funds and the EDSD and Finance Manager are responsible for ensuring they are spent as per the strict conditions set by the NSW Government, IPART and in accordance with Council’s purchasing and accounting policies and procedures.

The Panel does not authorise specific expenditure purchases: the CCM has that operational delegated authority. However, the Panel will be briefed during the CCM’s bi-monthly update and provision of the budget costing report. External sponsorship requests will be presented to the Panel for consideration.

If there are significant changes (defined as over 10%) to any of the five budget categories on Page 5 of this Plan, those changes are required to be approved by the Panel, with the proviso that any such changes will not impact the overall annual budget bottom line.

NOTE: Lismore’s professional services sector is not represented on the Panel, despite containing a significant proportion of SBRVL rate payers. It is recommended that this sector be invited to occupy one seat on the Panel, for the period 2016-2018.

3. Objectives, Funding + Governance .../2



Key Performance Indicators

As in previous Business Plans, a series of performance indicators are linked to the two-year plan over the period 2016 - 2018. These include:

1. The creation and rollout of a new television commercial and associated print, radio and digital advertising collateral aimed at new out-of-region markets, by September 2016.
2. The introduction of co-operative marketing campaigns that businesses can “buy into” and their subsequent take up (minimum 3 per year).
3. The implementation of a ‘buy local’ Consumer Loyalty and Rewards Program that stimulates more consumers to shop in Lismore; with success measured by the number of loyalty cards issued to shoppers and the number of businesses which participate in the scheme.
4. The development and effective management of a Digital Marketing Strategy that drives traffic to our website and social media platforms; to be assessed by analytical data via Facebook and Google.
5. An increased take up and use of the ‘Lismore-come to the heart’ brand by local businesses of at least 20 businesses over the next two years.
6. Delivery of additional revenue for the Program through grants, sponsorship, in-kind contributions and co-operative marketing over the next two years at a level of \$75,000-\$100,000.
7. An increase of 10% in overall patronage numbers at the various events and activities coordinated or assisted by the CCM, and not less than a 5% increase of attendees from outside the 2480 postcode at those major events where attendance surveying takes place.
8. Improved awareness of the Panel and Program content and outcomes, as evidenced by media coverage and the results of the third Program Review in late 2017.
9. Improved communications with the business sector and strategic partners such as the Lismore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, via the production and effective distribution of bi-monthly bulletins.
10. Expansion of business improvement and education programs presented in association with the Lismore Chamber of Commerce and Industry; measured by the take up rate and results reported by participating businesses.
11. Systemic reporting on all Program components, by which means individual campaigns, events, projects and activities are assessed, measured and the results reported, plus the introduction of a system to measure and report on vacancies in commercial and retail premises in the CBD on a quarterly basis.
12. Documented media coverage of all aspects of the Program throughout the next two years, to reflect the scope and level of activities presented by the Panel and CCM.

bpp

4. Program Reviews + Findings



The Lismore Business Promotion Program and its component elements have been reviewed twice in the past five years.

2016 review highlights - DSA Consulting

Sample: 75 business owners, 62 shoppers via on-line survey, 1 telephone interview.

Nearly three quarters of those surveyed (businesses and shoppers combined) were “very aware, aware or somewhat aware” of the existence of the Program, but 41% of combined respondents were unaware of both the objectives and the mission of the Program. At the same time 68% of the business respondents indicated being either ‘very aware’ or ‘aware’ of the Special Business Rate Variation Levy (SBRVL) used to fund the Program, in conjunction with Lismore City Council’s contribution.

There was a discrepancy between awareness and experience of events in Lismore between shoppers and business representatives. Business respondents had little appetite for elements of the current Program such as the CBD Magazine, supporting community groups, pop up spaces in the CBD and ongoing street activities. Furthermore, many felt that the Panel’s policy of funding external events was proving counterproductive, and that community groups should be self-supporting.

Conversely, elements such as such as increased marketing and promotion, support for business groups and major

CBD-events such as retail promotions had majority support by business respondents within the 2016 survey. DSA Consulting recommended that Key Performance Indicators be strengthened in the 2016-2018 period.

2012 review - SCU School of Business

Sample: 95 business owners, 118 members of the public surveyed, 17 in depth interviews, 8 written submissions

Overall the feedback and information received in the SCU review provides a qualified yes in answer to the question “is the Program achieving its objectives?” However there were clearly areas where further work and improvements could be made.

While the Business survey registered some dissatisfaction with the activities undertaken by the Program it appeared that there is broad support (73% of business respondents) for the continuation of the additional SBRVL funding to support the Program’s activities.

Key successes achieved by the Program and identified in the review include the ‘Lismore-come to the heart’ branding, an extensive calendar of events staged predominantly in the city centre, a comprehensive website featuring over 450 businesses, the Back Alley Gallery, arts and cultural activity year round, and well-established shopping promotions such as the annual Stocktake Sale and pre-Christmas marketing drive.



4. Program reviews + findings .../2



Common Findings from both Reviews

Overall, the Lismore Business Promotion Program has been achieving the objectives and fulfilling the vision contained within the previous 2013-2016 business plan, and the Lismore Business Panel is cohesive, motivated and works well together.

However, take up of the highly successful 'Lismore - come to the heart' brand by individual businesses remains poor. Seven years from its inception, awareness of the vision, aims and objectives of the Program among business operators is still lacking. There is a need for improved communication between the Panel and its stakeholders and partners in order to raise awareness of the Program's role in revitalising the CBD and promoting the city.

Shoppers and visitors to the city have been consistent in their awareness and approval of CBD events, promotions and placemaking efforts and equally consistent in asking for extended trading hours. Businesses do not appear to value the Program as highly as their customers and do not support extended opening hours (on weekends and late evenings, for example).

In essence, the Panel needs to recalibrate elements within the approved sections that make up the Program (Marketing, Events + Placemaking, Business) to allow a greater emphasis on promotions and activities that will increase benefits to the entire range of businesses which fund it.

Next Formal Review

As flagged, the current five year Additional SBRVL funding will end on 30 June 2018. A third and final review of the Program's operations during the next two years will be held in late 2017.

Further Information

For further background material or for information on any aspect of the Lismore Business Promotion Program, visit www.lismore.nsw.gov.au or contact:

[REDACTED]
City Centre Manager

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]