

Business 'snapshot' pointer to future strategic planning

As a 'snapshot', the outcomes of the Byron Bay Chamber of Commerce's recent major business survey may be a little blurred in some areas, but it has given the chamber strong pointers on areas to focus on to make the town a better place to do business.

While the chamber recognises the limitations of the survey in which 167 businesses out of a selected 500 responded, it still feels enough information can be extrapolated to form the basis of a future strategic plan for the positive economic development of the town.

A major finding of the survey, funded by the NSW Department of State and regional Development, showed employment had increased 24 percent and business activity had expanded significantly in the last two years and that future business expectations were positive.

But as chamber president, Gil Plessner, said at the launch of the report last week, people starting businesses at Byron Bay should not expect "manna from heaven" when they opened their doors.

Just like similar tourist towns, said Mr Plessner, people had to work hard to make their businesses succeed.

Hand in hand with the positive outlook for the future, are a number of shared concerns that have the potential to impact on business in the town.

Those concerns outlined in the survey report include the impact of visitor numbers (an estimated 1.7 million a year) on community services, traffic congestion in peak holiday times, parking and the general cleanliness and maintenance of the town.

Other concerns relate to high rates, land and building costs which some businesses feel could inhibit expansion.

The survey concluded that although most businesses expected demand for their services to increase, only a small percentage were considering expanding their current business.

It found that with more than half the businesses indicating they would be willing to work in conjunction with other businesses to expand business, forums could be organised where businesses could work towards innovative ways of achieving co-operative outcomes.

Following are some of the survey highlights:

- 85 percent of Byron Bay businesses are independently owned.

- 38 percent of survey respondents opened their business in the last five years.

- 62 percent of businesses sell more than 50 percent of their products and services locally.

- 39 percent of businesses are considering expansion in the next two years.

- 46 percent of respondents

considered parking inadequate in the town.

- 24 percent of businesses have problems recruiting skilled workers.

New look at LEP amendment

Byron Council is to have another look at a controversial residential density development proposal for Byron Bay and Suffolk Park in the wake of a big public response to the planned changes.

The council received 540 submissions and one petition when it recently exhibited Amendment 107 to the Byron Local Environmental

Plan (LEP) which limits areas were medium density and dual occupancy developments can occur.

Of the submissions, 255 objected to the amendment with 277 submissions and the petition with 65 signatures, supporting it.

The council said there was significant support for the need for interim measures to control residential

density while the place-based plan for Byron Bay, Suffolk Park and Ewingsdale was being finalised.

Some of those who opposed the amendment said the proposed density controls limited opportunities for further growth. Others raised legal issues which were being considered by council staff.

The submissions and a

range of options will be considered by the council's Environmental Planning and Local Approvals Committee on July 8.

Byron Mayor Cr Tom Wilson said the council had to take the concerns into account.

But Cr Wilson said the "intent" of Amendment 107 would happen "one way or another".

*Re LEP 5.107
Re Place-based Plan*

File in "Place-based planning LEP"

'Attack on rights'

The biggest attack on property rights and values by any council in living memory.

That's how Byron Bay property owner, Peter Kavanaugh, describes Byron Council's planned amendment 107 to the shirewide Local Environmental Plan (LEP).

Mr Kavanaugh, who has joined a number of Shirley Street property owners in opposing the amendment, said it attacked residential densities with a sledgehammer and did so with minimum notice and minimum opportunity to respond.

Byron Bay

With time for objections to the amendment due to close tomorrow afternoon, the residents have called on the council to extend its exhibition for six to eight weeks.

They also will lobby the council - and the State Government - to abandon the amendment.

Mr Kavanaugh said he and the other residents wanted the council to provide a "proper" explanation of Amendment 107 with the proposed "placed-based" Amendment 106.

He said Amendment 107 was about limiting densities right across Byron Bay and Suffolk park, while Amendment 106 was supposed to comprehensively plan for individual localities and places, including densities.

Residents wanted to know why the council was pre-empting Amendment 106 by promoting Amendment 107, he said.

Mr Kavanaugh said if Amendment 106 went ahead only four lots out of 146 in Byron Bay and Suffolk Park would retain an entitlement for medium density development.

He said of the 557 sites entitled to dual occupancy, only 139 would retain development rights.

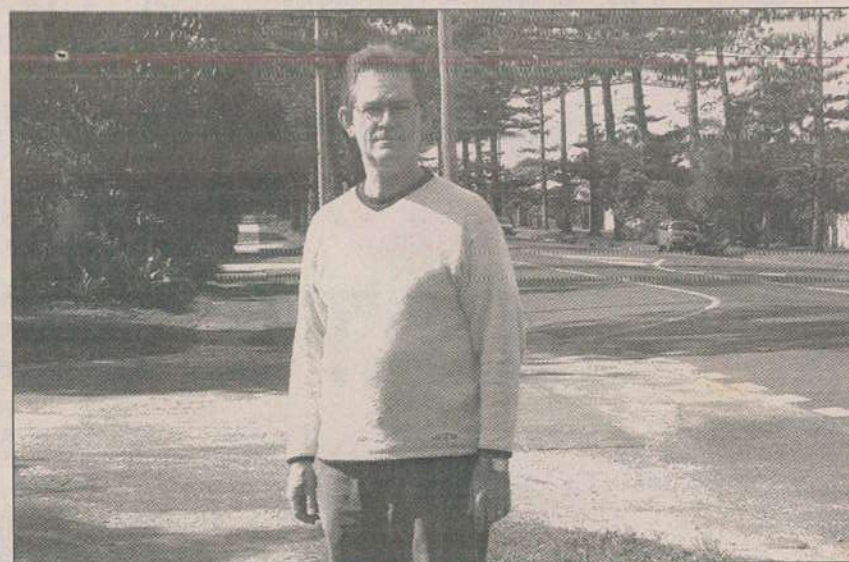
"This is an astonishing and unparalleled action by council," he said.

Mr Kavanaugh said he and the other Shirley Street property owners believed the council's failure to advise individually affected land owners of "this major change" was a denial of natural justice and due process.

He said which sites and which land owners won or lost was not precisely disclosed.

"Certainly, we have discovered that the Shirley Street residents lose out big time," he said.

"Many land owners here have held medium density entitlements since 1968 and held dual occupancy entitlements since 1988.



Peter Kavanaugh . . . amendment an attack on property values

"This is the biggest attack on property rights and values by any council in living memory, yet it is done with the minimum notice."

Mr Kavanaugh described the impacts of Amendment 107 as draconian and would exclude 3000 to 4000 people from making their permanent home at Byron Bay over the next decade.

He said the current town plan already had the lowest residential densities on the North Coast and if adopted, Amendment 106 would reduce Byron Bay densities back to where they were in the 1960s.

"There is little or no differentiation in the LEP between an area like Shirley Street with all its motels and holiday apartments and

West Suffolk Park where single dwellings predominate," he said.

Mr Kavanaugh said the Shirley Street residents urged all other affected property owners to lodge an objection with the council's general manager by 4 pm tomorrow afternoon.

● Cr Jan Barham has given notice that she will move an urgency motion at next Tuesday's ordinary meeting of the council to extend the exhibition period for Amendment 107 for 28 days.

Cr Barham said she also would seek to hold a public meeting to inform residents of the implications of the amendment and the justification for it.

Mayor says claims are 'codswallop'

Byron Mayor, Cr Tom Wilson described as "codswallop" the claim that the council had not engaged the community in Amendment 107 deliberations.

Cr Wilson said the amendment was based on extensive consultations with the Byron Bay community about the vision for settlement patterns in the Byron Bay catchment over three and a half years. He said there had been a series of public exhibitions, public meetings and precinct groups formed.

It was wrong to claim there

had not been adequate community consultation, he said.

Cr Wilson said the council was meeting the normal statutory obligations in regard to Amendment 107.

He said there had been more than enough time for property owners to get legal advice for their submissions.

It was critical for the council to "deliver the amendment into reality" to protect the community against unnecessary and unwanted additional urban settlement, he said.