



NIMBIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Inc
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NCOC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE— LCC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION MEETING MINUTES

Monday 20 February 2023,
At Birth & Beyond Hall

Meeting commenced 1730hrs,
Acknowledgment of Country

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Dafydd Hyett [President], Diana Roberts [Vice President], Peter Hughes [Treasurer], David Spain [Secretary], Samantha Allen, Aline Binetruy, Liam Brehme, Nicole Lindner, Carolione Todd **FROM LCC:** Eber Butron (Executive Manager Economy and Growth); Tina Irish (Manager Destination and Economy).

1. **LCC ‘Big View’:** Eber advised that he co-ordinates LCC’s Economic Development team. This has three directors being (i) Tina Irish as Manager Destination and Economy (ii) Andy Parks as Strategic Planning Coordinator (which includes Development & Culture), (iii) Katherine O’Regan as Head of Investment and Growth and (iv) Kate Steel, Environmental Strategies Coordinator.

The team administers strategic future growth (commercial, biodiversity), tourism & events and review of strategies. It is at present endeavouring to prepare a Nimbin Master Plan, which is more than a DCP, although both are broad level plans. The Master Plan goes into more detail of implementation (e.g. water supply, public facilities, roads & traffic). This project will involve community engagement and we will be endeavouring to engage with the Chamber.

Councillors are deliberating post-flood strategies, both for the city and the villages; we are now (post flood) in a regrowth phase. The new GM is expected to tweak the administrative arrangements but not make significant changes. Outside of Byron, Nimbin is seen as the major attraction in the area so LCC will continue to support where possible. **Diana** said that Nimbin has definite strategies but they fail implementation at LCC hands. **Tina** advised that LCC now has a new team of skilled community liaison officers.

2. **Visitnimbin website:** **Diana** said that, after LCC withdrew from delivery of all tourism services, at the commencement of Covid and then during the budget process 2020-2021, NCOC got a \$117k Bushfire Resilience grant to improve signage & websites as replacement visitor information strategies. However LCC refused to give us the visitnimbin website; it only allowed us to use it with consent, which proved frustrating due to personnel confusion at LCC and LCC making the site too complicated. The LCC events calendar does not work, so our social media strategy (which depends on it) is frustrated; LCC has presented a constant blockage to moving this forward. LCC was not responsive in using images we created to promote our district, although it did (for a time) appoint staff (being Wil) to a position based in Nimbin. Now the visitnimbin site (and those of both NCOC & NCCI) have to be migrated onto a new platform since their software is too old to maintain. The Chamber now feels we have wasted \$50,000 trying to enable advocacy for this district.

If we get a \$3000 grant from LCC we will use it to migrate the NCOC site onto a Wix platform (and the Nimbin Community Centre website will do likewise). However, we will have to withdraw from contributing to, or relying upon, visitnimbin unless we get control of that website plus funds to maintain it. The online shop belongs to the Chamber, so that, our imagery and our social media strategy will all go to the NCOC website alone. We will also look at putting the events calendar onto that website as LCC's maintenance of a Nimbin events program was abysmal in the past. The level of NCOC involvement in visitnimbin website will be discussed further next NCOC meeting when hopefully the future facts are clearer.

Liam said that over a score of Nimbin village businesses have product they need to promote and that activity will move to the NCOC site if we can't put it through visitnimbin, which would be a pity as the latter has a 7000 persons per month traffic. The NCOC site would be built on common or usual Wix software, and will not be unique or customised.

Tina admitted that LCC previously had had low resources, but advised that it now has 1.5 staff to manage websites and will be able to administer the visitnimbin and villages websites. She said that the NCOC site could reflect back to visitnimbin which would enable the exposure.

- 3. Visitor Information Centre:** **Diana** said that, without community consultation, in February 2020 (see comment in point 2 above), LCC closed the Nimbin VIC. This put a burden on local, main street businesses to step up and provide that service (of directing, explaining & guiding) every day. This impost is especially burdensome between 10.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m. The quality of information that comes from local businesses depends very much on the person, how informed they are and how busy on the day. This is not a good model and extensive consultation identified the need for an operative, open visitor information service.

In October 2020 the Bush Theatre offered themselves for this purpose, but migrating the VIC there was hampered by the pandemic and the consequent absence of tourists coming through the village. There was also no support for a self-funded VIC model forthcoming from LCC. This effort is not considered to be an inherently flawed model, however it does face difficulties since this venue is on the outskirts of the CBD and, commercially, the VIC being open is dependent upon hospitality staff being available for the associated cafe. Partially due to steep award rates and partially due to staff opting to take holidays, this was not the case during December 2022 / January 2023 and the VIC was closed. This was unfortunate, as in the event this was the busiest trading periods the village has experienced in over 3 years.

We need to consider a different model. The ideal situation would be having a VIC in the main street with the Nimbin Economic Development Officer based there. The Community Centre ended up being out of pocket establishing an office for Wil but he only worked from the office infrequently and his LCC job description is now economic development rather than a tourism focus. A VIC in the Community Centre office would be much closer to the CBD and a range of cafes, and so could be a stepping stone to finding a better space within the village. It would require some financial support from LCC but would be a much cheaper model than the prior VIC at 48 Cullen Street. NCOC will plan for a budget submission to support this model to be made - ideally submitted before 10 March.

Tina advised that LCC has two indoor digital touch-screen kiosks (for points of interest, events etc.), that only need power and internet connection, and could make one available. **Diana** advised that NCOC would consider possible placement venues and revert to **Tina**.

- 4. Wil's Role:** **Tina** advised that Wil's role is Nimbin economic development. He is in a transition stage, at present mainly dealing with external enquiries and being a conduit leveraging promotional ideas; he is LCC representative on the Wayfinding project. **Dafydd** said that LCC red tape is preventing the Bush Theatre business adapting to modern times, and the lack of visitor accommodation is frustrating. **Tina** advised that LCC can give guidance and assist with grants. **Diana** said that LCC opposition to accommodation at the fire sites had caused the developer (Simon) to lose his mojo. **Liam** said budget accommodations had been constrained by Covid & violence; there is no obvious answer to low & medium cost accommodation. **Nicole** said that she had eventually got their rural accommodation facility approved, but Airbnb facilities avoided these controls and needed better regulation.

5. **Wayfinding Project:** Tina advised that this is advancing nicely but is still at design stage. Main Roads are gathering metrics of road usage so as to inform future design. Landscape architects have been engaged for the project. Consideration is being given to modernising the Museum blister (smaller tables, shade structure & ferrocement shelter).
6. **Walking Track:** Wil, Diana Roberts, Robyn from Djangbung gardens & Michael Balderstone are major inputs into detailed infrastructure design, but future LCC input into tourism/economic attraction & maintenance remain involved.
7. **Signage:** Diana advised that one of the three entry signs was knocked over (probably by a truck moving a house) and one was erected at a site approved by LCC but then moved (by it) due to proximity to a water supply. The sign overlooking Nimbin Rocks has LCC gravel heaps next to it year after year. There are many minor signs. Maintenance of the signs is an ongoing issue. Tina asked for details to go in a budget submission and will lobby & present requirements to Clifford, apply for lighting grants etc.. General maintenance requests can be inserted into the LCC's Complaint portal, which ensures that it goes direct to the responsible people. Diana said that these portals do not get results; it would be a better idea for LCC to fund a third (local) employee for Jungle Patrol; he could attend to routine maintenance tasks (brush-cutting entrances etc.).
8. **Aquarius 50:** Dafydd advised that a big program is being developed but there was no funding for full-time organizers, so NCOC withdrew (except for holding finances as trustee) and other organizers ["AQ50"], which include Nimbin Aquarius Festival Inc. [NAFI], are continuing on a smaller scale. NCOC still holds \$15000 from LCC for a commerce-activating event, on basis it would show commercial benefit, and now needs guidance what to do with it. Tina advised that this money could still be put towards the AQ50 celebration. She also has \$20,000 to put towards a future Nimbin Illuminate Festival. This would be a one-off; the Illuminate Festival would need to develop a strategy to see it ongoing into the future, maybe as a biennial event, with minimal financial support from Council.
9. **Mardi Grass:** This is a 3-day event that costs \$100k to put on and takings barely cover that. The cost of the skips is high, about \$8k, so relief would be welcome.
10. **Village Condition:** Diana drew attention to expressions of concern about aspects of the village infrastructure (such as roads, potholes, inadequate facilities) that are detailed in the minutes of our meeting with John Walker the (then) LCC General Manager on 07-11-2022 and in our "Nimbin Village Condition Report" dated 06-07-2022, which NCOC emailed to Aveyly McCann (LCC Chief of Staff) on 16-08-2022. Tina said she would raise the issues identified with the relevant LCC personnel.
11. **LCC Planning Department:** Diana relayed concerns about slowness & confusion at hands of LCC planning staff. David said that builders & contractors had told him they had to add 10% to quotes if they had to deal with LCC, and there is a need for LCC to demonstrate that funds raised under EPAA s.7.11 as part of consent conditions are 'relevant', that is applied locally not far away across the LGA. Tina said developers should come to her first; she will guide them on the most efficient way to proceed. Eber said that that flood / pothole damage is still extensive and that complaints about the planning & regulatory arms of Council are not LCC specific but rather are a source of concern throughout the region. A ten-year plan governs application of development contributions; he will check on presentation of evidence that this plan works fairly in a way that is relevant & appropriate to the source developments.

End 1930hrs

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