

Executive Report 2015/2016

Focus this year was to increase membership and we achieved an increase of 20% over the membership year. We achieved this result by:

Continuing to “lift our profile” by building valuable links to:

Prospective new members – changing our meeting format to focus on networking and building real and immediate connections between businesses locally; going back to monthly meetings; reinstating two, free, open-to-all-businesses, “Mix at Six” events this year to allow prospective members to meet NICC; moving our venues in both the North and South; focus on membership South of Seacliff Bridge by moving at least two meetings in that part of our region.

Continuing to “Championing an issue” – internet connectivity and speed remains a critical issue for small business in the Northern Illawarra. It remains wholly unacceptable that suburbs adjacent to other suburbs in the Northern Illawarra are separated by years in the availability timeline for the NBN and that current reality will keep businesses in the Northern part of our region at a significant competitive disadvantage for those years.

Continuing to “demonstrate relevance” to membership by adopting strategies that complement our members businesses – new website and social media that drives business to members by complimenting their on-line presence and offering free outlets like Chamber Chatter media and reposting and sharing their social media posts to the NICC Facebook page. We implemented an amended membership fee strategy and reduced our membership fee to \$99.00.

Government - Gareth Ward MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for the South Coast and Illawarra, open dialogue on issues such as internet, train timetable for the Northern Illawarra and links to South-Western Sydney; participating in the Ministerial Roundtable with NSW Treasurer at which we raised the issues of “competitive disadvantage” re internet connectivity and speed, the need for the continuation of funding for free TAFE courses, continuing to support the construction of the F6 extension North into Sydney to improve access into that market from businesses located and domiciled in the Northern Illawarra and to improve flow of potential customers out of Sydney into our region, tourism opportunities such as the refurbishment of Bald Hill and the impact of public transport; specifically the train and bus timetable; on parking for access to shops and other businesses in our region.

Media – focusing on and securing an increase in local media coverage in 2508 District News, 2515 Coast News, Northern Illawarra on-line, Advertiser and Illawarra Mercury. Implemented a continuous advertising campaign in 2508 District News and 2515 Coast News through the second quarter of the year to support our Chamber Chatter column and the four promotions undertaken in the first half of the year with the aim of lifting our profile.

Community - Successful in our submission to Southern Phone for the purchase of two defibrillators; one now installed by Wollongong City Council in the Thirroul District Community Centre & Library and one in the Helensburgh Library. The improvement in our presence in the community also resulted in NICC being recognised as a Nominee for the Community Group Award in the Wollongong City Council Australia Day Awards of 2016. In addition and as a result of maintaining a professional business relationship with Telstra Illawarra, Telstra Illawarra donated \$1,000 to NICC affiliate member Need A Feed, in December 2015, as recommended by NICC.

NSWBC – promoting the value to members of the Alliance Program to members.

Destination Wollongong and Wollongong City Council – gained commitment for on-line linkages from our on-line presence to be included in DW's on-line presence and a commitment from WCC to work with NICC on the design and content of signage at Bald Hill.

Continuing our “buy Chamber / by local” initiatives to drive purchasing at our members businesses with the winners buying again from our members. Conducted three different promotions heading into Christmas.

Discussions with representatives of WCC, namely Mr Steven Robinson, on issues relating to how projects like the footpath refurbishment in Walker St, Helensburgh, may affect small businesses, as many small businesses are located on Walker Street. For example, WCC was advised that the NICC is always concerned about how a project may change parking configuration and parking restrictions that will adversely affect flow of customers into and out of businesses. NICC also strongly requested that any such project undertaken by WCC in the 2508 area must have WCC working with NBN Co to ensure that any WCC works accommodate future NBN Co work, including the inclusion of conduits. This action would clearly make any future NBN Co installation works easier and more cost effective and reduce the need to dig up and destroy any good work done by WCC. NICC expressed our view that projects such as the footpath refurbishment must be undertaken by WCC as part of a total plan for the Helensburgh CBD, not as a stand-alone project that may result in an inconsistent streetscape over time.

NICC also participated in the 2016 Illawarra & South Coast Local Business Awards, whereby the NICC is a Finalist in these Awards, with the winners to be announced in August 2016. Our participation in the 2016 Illawarra & South Coast Local Business Awards allows the NICC to continue to engage with the local business community, on a much larger scale.

Launched a powerful online directory to enhance, complement and create marketing value for members. It's an optimised, google friendly website www.nicc.net.au that also provides tourism info and local business news. Again, we secured agreement from Wollongong City Council to have our website shown on the Information Blade to be installed at Bald Hill later in 2016 and secured agreement from Destination Wollongong to have our website

This has been a year of significant activity on several fronts for our membership and we are clearly poised for those fronts to come to fruition in the next membership year.

Executive Team 2015/2016
July 2016