



WAGGA WAGGA
BUSINESS
CHAMBER



PERFORMANCE REPORT

2020-2022



Acknowledgement of Country

The Wagga Wagga Business Chamber acknowledges the Wiradjuri people who are the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders both past and present.

INTRODUCTION

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Council and the Wagga Wagga Business Chamber was signed in February 2020. The two-year agreement had been developed to support the local economy through business development, education, advocacy and, recognition and advice for business.

A month after the agreement was signed COVID 19 hit our business community. There was a lot of uncertainty and restrictions soon came into play. Whilst this might seem untimely, we would argue that the Council support of the business community could not have come at a better time. The funding from Council has allowed us to increase our resourcing to a full-time position allowing us to provide more advocacy, communicate more information and support more businesses than before.

Council's support has also allowed us to deliver programs such as Shop Local Wagga Wagga to support local business. Shop Local Wagga Wagga is a gift card program for locally owned businesses designed to keep money in our local economy. We have sold \$44,989 in gift cards having a local economic impact of around \$80,000.

While we have been assisting businesses navigate COVID and creating initiatives to aid recovery, we have remained focused on meeting the outcomes of the MOU. While restrictions have prevented events and have challenged tourist initiatives, we are proud to have met the majority of outcomes set out in the agreement with 44 being complete and the remaining four partially complete or in progress.

One of our first goals under the MOU was to develop a four-year Strategic Plan, which the Chamber board adopted in September 2020. This document set our vision and mission as a Chamber as well as our values as an organisation and priorities. One of our values as an organisation is inclusive. While we are a member based organisation we provide a free newsletter available to all businesses, we have made all of our events and programs available to non-members and engage with all businesses for our advocacy and consultation efforts. Our activities are not only focused on helping members but the Wagga Wagga economy.

We believe this public private partnership is key to ensuring that we continue to have a thriving economy as we partner with Council to not only promote the City as a regional capital but to leverage all the opportunities that are coming our way and capitalise on them.

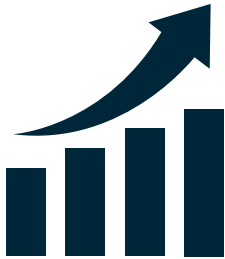
HIGHLIGHTS



We have seen
40% growth in our audience



We have met
44/48 objectives in the MOU with the remaining four in progress



We have seen
20% growth in our membership



We have sold
\$44,987 worth of Shop Local Wagga Wagga Gift cards



We have secured grants funding to host events for Small Business Month and SafeWork NSW to help build capacity and capability in our local businesses



We have held
60 Events



We were announced as a finalist for
Outstanding Local Chamber in the Murray Riverina Awards



We received
90 applications for the Golden Crow Awards 2021.
With winners representing Wagga at the Regional and State Awards.



OUR VISION

The Wagga Wagga Business Chamber is recognised as an energetic and entrepreneurial Chamber. We are a proactive Chamber that gets results.

Business people want to be a part of the Chamber community not only for the benefits that we offer but also so they can contribute to the future of the business community in Wagga Wagga.

OUR MISSION

To empower local businesses, impacting positively on the economy by connecting, educating, recognising, and advocating to ensure a stronger future for Wagga Wagga.

OUR VALUES

INCLUSIVE

Our community is open to all businesses and those individuals passionate about business.

INNOVATIVE

Coming up with new ideas on how we can best service our community.

COLLABORATIVE

We take a combined approach to sustaining successful outcomes for our business community and our region.



Our Board and Staff



Jennifer Hand
President



Tim Sheather
Vice President



Charles Talbot
Treasurer



Megan Lawrence
Secretary



Michael Phelan
Director



Caleb Richards
Director



Sam Miles
Director



Lara Tritton
Director



Serena Hardwick
Business Manager

OBJECTIVE 1

Support all endeavours of Council to communicate and consult with the business community

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.1 | Ensure Council is properly informed about and connected to the Wagga Wagga business community |  |
| 1.2 | Provide communication opportunities for Council through the Chamber network of members and key stakeholders so that Council are able to effectively communicate their message to the business community |  |
| 1.3 | Promote Government programs that support the business community |  |
| 1.4 | With the assistance of Council coordinate and hold at least two workshops annually on specific Council issues |  |
| 1.5 | Assist in consulting with the business community regarding Council business related activities |  |

OBJECTIVE 1

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

One of the key roles that the Chamber plays within the business community is ensuring businesses are well informed. Our investment into sharing relevant information as well as creating content has been acknowledged with 40% growth of our social channels over the period.

We ensure Council is connected and informed by meeting on a regular basis to provide information and insights into what is happening within the local business community and inform Council of local issues when they occur. We are also connectors, introducing and organising meetings with businesses tendering for significant projects, those looking at operating or delivering services here and our local businesses identifying their ideas and challenges.

Recently we hosted representatives of Council for site tours of some of our Golden Crow Award winners where they were able to take a closer look at the operations of these businesses who went on to represent our City at a regional and state level.

As part of our partnership, the Chamber offers all of our communication channels for Council to utilise to inform and consult with the business community including our fortnightly newsletter, social media channels, networking events, the Central Activity District committee meetings and the opportunity to host events.

Over the MOU period our channels have been used to promote the public exhibition period for key documents and relevant policies and what they mean for the community, promotion of different projects and events Council has undertaken. These have included:

- Shared posts from Wagga Events for dining options during lockdown
- City Centre Master Plan
- Consultation period for changes to planning instruments with the introduction of artisan food terminology
- Local Strategic Planning Statement Consultation
- Lost Lanes
- Wagga Christmas
- CBD Master Plan consultation
- Food Truck trial and policy
- Tourism Partner Program
- Small Business Grants
- RiFL project

Whilst we did not deliver the two workshops annually on specific Council issues, we were able to deliver a Business After Hours event hosted by Council as part of the public exhibition period for the Local Strategic Planning Statement. To further promote this key planning document, a short video was created for our socials on the document answering a few key questions.

We also partnered with Council to host the 'We Do Respect' Campaign launch in January 2021 which received media coverage and had a sellout attendance. This campaign received positive engagement from our members with businesses implementing training, sharing content on socials and more importantly having open discussions. The success and engagement with this campaign saw the Chamber develop and deliver a further event, which was a lunch with The Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC then Minister for Women and Steph Cooke MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier and Member for Cootamundra. The event discussed the We do Respect campaign, the work Steph Cooke MP had been doing on coercive control and other government initiatives to promote equity.








We invited Council to our Central Activity District (CAD) Committee meetings on several occasions to cover topics such as current issues and challenges with the main street precinct, events to be held and Christmas trading and activations.

We have promoted other State and Federal government initiatives that support business, which has been particularly important throughout COVID. These have included helping businesses access funding for training and business planning, information about grants and subsidies, rent relief and linking them to local contacts for the Service NSW Business Concierge service, Training Services NSW and the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

OBJECTIVE 2

Work collaboratively with Council to make Wagga Wagga the regional capital of Australia

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

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| 2.1 | With Council, advocate to the Federal Government and NSW Government to make our community a priority |  |
| 2.2 | Promote the Bomen Special Activation Precinct and continue to work with Council and key stakeholders to communicate the advantages |  |
| 2.3 | Promote the Health & Knowledge Precinct and continue to work with Council and key stakeholders to communicate the advantages |  |
| 2.4 | Continue to work with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to provide insights from the business community to help inform their strategies |  |
| 2.5 | Contribute to regular media coverage promoting the City |  |
| 2.6 | Promote Council attraction initiatives through Chamber communications |  |
| 2.7 | Attend meetings as required by local, state and federal governments |  |

OBJECTIVE 2

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

As ambassadors of the City, the Chamber actively meets with businesses looking to invest and expand in the City and promotes what the City has to offer.

In August 2020, the Chamber partnered with The Business Council of Australia for a live webinar as part of the Stronger Australia series to showcase the opportunities Wagga Wagga offers as we emerged from COVID-19 including the Special Activation Precinct and the Health and Knowledge Precinct. The webinar saw us collaborate with Council and Committee4Wagga to promote Wagga Wagga. Feedback from the Business Council indicated that the Wagga Wagga webinar had the most online registrations to date, an achievement we are very proud of.

The Chamber communicated the public exhibition of the Bomen Special Activation Precinct through our communication channels. To ensure that businesses were aware and understood the significance of the draft project, we caught up with the Department of Planning to record a short video on the project and the outcomes planned to achieve. This was used to encourage businesses to review the plans and make submissions during the exhibition period.

The Chamber continues to support opportunities for funding and investment for our community and have provided written letters of support for;

- RIFL Intermodal Hub Interface Improvement Program Proposal
- Wagga Wagga City Council High Street grant application
- Charles Sturt University next stage development of the AgriPark
- Charles Sturt University Southern Drought Hub submission
- Department of Planning – Bomen Special Activation Precinct
- Charles Sturt University Food and Beverage Manufacturing Ecosystem
- NSW State Government RiFL Hub Grain Terminal and Rail infrastructure proposal
- Wagga Wagga City Council Winter Festival
- Wagga Wagga City Council Lost Lanes Festival
- Wagga Wagga City Council Night Economy grant application
- Charles Sturt University Resilience Project
- Private Business applications for grant funding
- Support for Commercial Development Applications
- Support for key Council Strategic documents

The Chamber proactively engages with all levels of Government to ensure our community is a priority. Interactions have included:

- Meeting with Margaret Beazely, Governor of NSW regarding the Regional Outreach Program
- Meeting with the Hon. Damien Tudehope, Minister for Finance and Small Business regarding expanding the trainee program to cover existing workers, commercial tenancy code of practice, mandating rental reductions
- Meeting with the Hon. Dominic Perrottet MP, Treasurer regarding the impacts of COVID-19
- Meeting with the Hon Dr Geoff Lee Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education regarding skills shortages and encouraging him to visit the City.
- Meeting with the NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro and Wes Fang MLC
- Regular meetings with the Business Roundtable including Council, Dr Joe McGirr MP and Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Regular meetings with Council's Economic Development team.

We have also participated in Government Roundtables including:

- TAFE Roundtable with the Hon Dr Geoff Lee Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education
- Business Fibre Roundtable- Connectivity in Wagga Wagga with the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, Minister for Communications
- Special online address with The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP Treasurer of Australia

The Chamber regularly participate in local media covering local topics, advocacy and promoting the City. We have covered topics such as supporting local business, activation of the Central Activity District, connectivity, impacts of COVID-19, decentralisation, skills and workforce shortages.

Our partnership with Southern Cross Austereo allows us to promote the City monthly. Not only do we discuss initiatives of the Chamber we also discuss investment in the area and items of interest such as Wagga Wagga being part of the NBN Business Fibre roll out and connectivity within the City.

Some additional items that the Chamber has worked on to promote the City as a regional capital have been the design of a project concept and brief for a Decentralisation event that showcases the City and the region. The event concept included businesses from different industries and different sizes to discuss the benefits of operating within the City and share lessons learnt. The event also included promoting key assets of the City including the Special Activation Precinct, RiFL, the Health and Knowledge precinct as well as the city access to key utilities and connectivity. Whilst the concept hasn't received funding as yet we will continue to apply for relevant grants for the project.

We have also started posting on our social channels 'Meet our Members' posts. We are proud of our diverse membership and want to promote the local businesses that support us in supporting the local economy. These posts are also to showcase the variety and scope of businesses that operate here in Wagga Wagga.

OBJECTIVE 3

Promote Wagga Wagga as a destination for tourists and residents

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

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| 3.1 | Work with Chamber members to encourage investment to keep and create accommodation opportunities |  |
| 3.2 | Work with the Tourism group to develop and grow a "Tourism Friendly Business" program |  |
| 3.3 | Support current stakeholders by connecting them with local businesses interested in becoming a Tourist Friendly Business. |  |
| 3.4 | Accommodate visitors and welcome people through the Chamber's support of the Tourism group and communications. |  |
| 3.5 | Showcase the capacity and variety of event facilities our city has to offer |  |
| 3.6 | Develop a Welcome to Wagga program to provide advice and guidance on family relocations |  |

OBJECTIVE 3

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

While the last two years have been tough for tourism the Chamber has worked on several campaigns to help support local businesses during and after the impacts of COVID by creating and developing initiatives to engage resident. Over this period we have also spent time gaining feedback from the industry to advocate for the sector in terms of support needed.

As part of the virtual Golden Crow Awards 2.0 in September 2020 we ran the #throwacrow campaign. The purpose of this campaign was not only to celebrate our finalists but also to celebrate and support our local businesses. We encouraged finalists, businesses and the wider community to participate by registering what businesses they were supporting on the Crow Award night for their chance to win prizes. The #throwacrow campaign had 155 individuals register their support, and 19 donations from local business to be used as prizes. The real success were the number of booking made across the City from reservations at pubs and local restaurants, caterers and musicians. The feedback and vibe was sensational.

We replicated the #throwacrow for our 2021 Golden Crow Awards also, after having to move our event online due to lock down, encouraging people to tune in online and get takeaway from a local businesses

One of the hardest hit businesses during COVID have been our pubs and clubs. To encourage people to support them we partnered with Council, Southern Cross Austereo and Wagga Eats to bring the competition for Wagga's best Schnitty. The competition ran over two weeks with the community voting on what they thought was Wagga's best. The judges were none other than the Schnitty Committee, a podcast with a cult following.

The Union Club Hotel took out first place in the competition and the Koorinal Hotel came a close second. They both went on to take out the top two Schnitty's in NSW, granting Wagga Wagga as the place of great Schnitzel.

The Chamber runs on average of 30 events a year, using different venues all the time to show the different facilities and spaces we have on offer in the City.

We acknowledge that one of our roles as an organisation is to introduce and welcome people to our City whether it be those looking to tender for projects, those considering to relocate or start a business in the area or those just looking for an introduction to the Wagga Wagga Business community. We are able to meet these enquiries by organising a meeting, providing relevant information and resources on the City, as well as connecting them with at least one other relevant stakeholder.

We work with Council's visitor economy team to not only promote and refer businesses to the established Tourism Partner program and events, but we also promote initiatives of the partner program as well. We look forward to collaborating further with the team on how we can support the program further through networking opportunities, events and education.

We have seen more people from outside of the City attending our events in the last 12 months despite COVID restrictions and we believe that business tourism is something we are able to offer and promote and have now become a Tourism Partner ourselves and registered with the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse.

While we haven't developed a 'welcome to Wagga' program as such we have considered how we can better promote ways for people to get introduced to the business community of Wagga. We have registered with the Wagga Wagga Community Directory, designed to help new residents navigate the City and find support. We have also reached out to Soldier On to discuss how we might assist Defence families relocating to the area, specifically spouses with skills sets looking for work or those exiting the Defence Force. We were able to provide some helpful contacts, and suggested our monthly networking events be promoted through the Soldier on channels.

We have heavily promoted the Dine & Discover vouchers to ensure these are being redeemed and have assisted businesses to register and have their eligibility reviewed for the program to maximise the benefits of the program for our community.

OBJECTIVE 4

Work collaboratively with other organisations and promote shared value

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

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| 4.1 | Work collaboratively with other organisations such as the Business Enterprise Centre (BEC), Committee 4 Wagga, Women in Business and education providers |  |
| 4.2 | Collaborate with other local business organisations on at least 2 events per year with topics that show the benefits of shared value outcomes for business. |  |
| 4.3 | Promote the concepts of shared value to members through Chamber communications |  |
| 4.4 | Seek out businesses that have implemented shared value principles and tell their story to educate business |  |

OBJECTIVE 4

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

As part of the Chamber's endorsed Strategic Plan, engaging and collaborating with stakeholders is one of our key priorities. We acknowledge that when we collaborate with others the outcome is far greater.

We partnered with Women in Business Wagga Wagga to deliver a webinar on mental health in June 2020. This was a successful collaboration that brought the business community information on an important topic during COVID-19. In response to the successful webinar a second webinar again partnering with Women in Business was delivered on Mental Health in the workplace in September 2020.

For Small Business Month 2020, we partnered with Council, the Business Enterprise Centre and NSW Government to deliver a Small Business Month event. This collaboration allowed us to combine resources to run our first hybrid event, where 80 small business representatives attended an event either online or one of five physical locations on 'how a small business can build a big brand'. We will again be partnering with Council and the NSW State Government for Small Business month which was postponed from September 2021 to March 2022. We assisted Council in preparing the grant application with both organisations being successful in acquiring funds for the event.

During the 2021 lockdown we partnered with North Sydney Chamber and several other Chambers from across the state to host an online event. The guest speaker was Jeremy Fleming, founder of Stagekings and IsoKing. Jeremy spoke about the impacts of Covid on his event business and discussed how IsoKing was born. This collaboration provided our community with access to a great guest speaker and the chance to network with other business owners across the state.

Through our communication channels we regularly promote education opportunities, programs and initiatives from other organisations including the Business Enterprise Centre, Charles Sturt University AgriTech Incubator, Women in Business Wagga Wagga and Regional Development Australia Riverina.

In December 2020, we were able to demonstrate the principles of shared value with our member event Lunch with Baptist Care Watermark and Riverina Community College. The event showcased the mutually beneficial relationship between the two organisations where residents were provided an opportunity to socialise weekly with the opening of their community restaurant and the Riverina Community College Certificate III Hospitality students gained work experience.

We also promoted the concept of shared value when we shared the benefits for employers and employees undertaking the PaTH Internships program run by the Personnel Group promoting the employment of people with mental health disabilities.

OBJECTIVE 5

Create and enhance partnerships with education providers

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

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| 5.1 | Actively promote education opportunities for business as they arise |  |
| 5.2 | Collaborate and encourage discussion with business and education providers to ascertain needs |  |
| 5.3 | Complete a gap analysis on the training and skills needs of local businesses and the current education and training programs currently being provided |  |
| 5.4 | Inspire local business people to further their education through formal course and training opportunities |  |
| 5.5 | Promote service provider opportunities that support the employment of people with a disability. |  |
| 5.6 | Connect businesses to members that can help them access apprentices/trainees and are able to assist with the required documentation |  |

5.7 Support members looking for apprentices to connect with service providers and offer one annual event that helps promote pathways for businesses to connect



5.8 Promote opportunities that retain talent in the region and provide a platform for graduates to connect via networking events



OBJECTIVE 5

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

One of the priorities of the Chamber is to provide educational opportunities for our local businesses to assist with developing capacity and capability.

During early 2021, we worked closely with Training Services NSW to promote the funding available to businesses for skills and training and hosted a Business After Hours event to find out more about the different program funds available. This provided businesses the opportunity to ask questions about eligibility for funding and discuss some of the skills shortages they were facing. This was also an opportunity for businesses to engage with Local Skills Brokers.

In partnership with Training Services, we developed a survey to help identify training needs, and business maturity in workforce planning. Although we had low participation in the survey, with further consultation with businesses across a number of industries we were able to gather information around training and skills needs.

We constantly refer businesses to contact Training Service NSW Skills brokers prior to organising training and through this we have saved businesses thousands of dollars in training that has allowed them to expand or diversify their business.

On a regular basis we promote training opportunities through our communication channels which have included:

- Training and employment opportunities for people with a disability
- Incentives around trainees and apprenticeships
- Free Infection Control training
- Start up courses
- Business Skills courses
- Leadership training
- Fee Free training through Registered Training Organisations such as Riverina Community College and TAFE Riverina,
- Mental Health First Aid courses

Not only do we promote educational opportunities for business we also collaborate with industry leaders to develop events that are relevant. Events have included the development of a Business Growth Series launched by Dr Joe McGirr which provided businesses an overview of the number of projects coming to town and the opportunities for local business. The rest of the series will focus on business growth with topics like financing new equipment and expansion, workforce planning and goal setting.

At the end of 2021, the Chamber received notification that we were successful in acquiring funds on behalf of SafeWork NSW to host two events focused on building awareness and maturity in safe work practices. The Chamber applied for this funding to facilitate these events based on feedback that this was an area for improvement for local businesses when participating in procurement processes.

We have also hosted events in the past to showcase education providers including a Before Hours with TAFE Riverina in early 2020, which included a tour of the campus and presentation on course offerings

In late 2020 we formed a partnership with Riverina Community College who joined the Chamber as sponsors. In February 2021 they hosted a Lunch and Learn event showcasing their facility, fee free training, apprenticeships, and professional development courses available.

While we support our members by connecting them with service providers for the apprentice and traineeship needs and have also hosted an event on funding and pathways for businesses, we have only hosted one event over the two year period focused on this. In the absence of hosting a second event we have discussed concepts of showcasing career paths available in Wagga Wagga and connecting business to students in the region. We have met with Koorringal High School to discuss such concepts and will be working on future concepts during 2022.

OBJECTIVE 6

Encourage growth in our Central Activity District

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

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|-----|---|---|
| 6.1 | Establish a Central Activity District Committee to connect with members in the area |  |
| 6.2 | Provide input into Council's projects such as the Economic Development Strategy and CBD Masterplan, |  |
| 6.3 | Support the implementation of any strategies developed through Council's projects |  |
| 6.4 | Encourage and support businesses in the Central Activity District to nominate for the Golden Crow Awards (both member & non-member) |  |

OBJECTIVE 6

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

The Chamber have established a Central Activity District Committee to connect members representing both Fitzmaurice Street and Baylis Street. The purpose of this group is to facilitate the collaboration of main street businesses as well as come up with ideas and initiatives to support the CAD. This group has been used to assist Council with consultation regarding functionality and issues, ideas for further activation of the precinct and event concepts such as Lost Lanes and Christmas trading and displays.

Feedback from the CAD committee was used to inform the Friday night shopping trial. Local businesses identified the desire to have a Christmas on main type event. With restrictions still in place the concept of Friday night shopping was developed. While the Friday night trial was not overly successful, we demonstrated our ability to collaborate with Council and respond to feedback from local business.

The Chamber has been supportive of the development of key strategies to support the economic growth of our City and has been an active participants of relevant consultation. We provided two members of the board and Business Manager to participate in the consultation undertaken for the Regional Activation Strategy and more recently, worked with Council to promote the consultation for the CBD master plan.

We have also supported projects through writing letters of support for Council's High Street grant application that Council applied for upgrades to Fitzmaurice Street, Lost Lanes Festival and night activation event.

At the end of October 2021, the Chamber launched the Shop Local Wagga Wagga gift card program. Whilst the program is open to all locally owned businesses, the program did specifically target the CAD and currently over 70% of the redemption stores are located within the CAD. We have selected six locations where the card can be purchased, which have been located throughout the CBD area and include Council's Visitor Information Centre.

To encourage businesses in the CAD to nominate for the Crow Awards, flyers were delivered down Baylis and Fitzmaurice streets with information on how to apply. This approach along with direct messaging businesses via social media and a strong social campaign saw the Chamber receive 90 applications for the 2021 Business Awards. A third of our finalists were representative of the CAD businesses.

OBJECTIVE 7

Provide strong leadership and advocacy for the business community

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

7.1 Seek out a diverse group of local business leaders (to ensure the WWBC board stays at capacity) to volunteer their time to ensure that Wagga Wagga continues to enjoy a vibrant and thriving local economy



7.2 Chamber Board members will be the first line of support and advocacy for business



7.3 Provide representation on committees such as the Airport Advisory Committee and other non-government related boards



7.4 Grow local leaders through the Crow Awards through the following categories: Outstanding Young Employee & Outstanding Business Leader, Outstanding Young Entrepreneur



OBJECTIVE 7

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Our volunteer Board represent a diverse range of industries, volunteering their time to advocate and support local businesses and the wider Wagga Wagga economy. Our Board members also contribute to other community organisations and groups, support services, recreational groups and industry groups.

The Chamber represent the Wagga Wagga business communities' interest in several capacities including:

- Representation on the Business NSW Murray Riverina Local Advisory Council
- Consultative Committee Member on the Hume Link Consultative Committee
- Consultative Committee Member on the Inland Rail Consultative Committee
- Participants in the Riverina Economic Development Officers Forum

We have also organised and participated in meetings with State and Federal government representatives to ensure the needs of our community are understood which have included:

- Meeting with Margaret Beazely Governor of NSW regarding the Regional Outreach Program
- Meeting with the Hon. Damien Tudehope, Minister for Finance and Small Business regarding expanding the trainee program to cover existing workers, commercial tenancy code of practice, mandating rental reductions
- Meeting with the Hon. Dominic Perrottet MP, Treasurer regarding the impacts of COVID-19
- Meeting with the Hon Dr Geoff Lee Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education regarding skills shortages and encouraging him to visit the City.

- Meeting with the NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro and Wes Fang MLC
- TAFE Roundtable with the Hon Dr Geoff Lee Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education
- Business Fibre Roundtable- Connectivity in Wagga Wagga with the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, Minister for Communications
- Special online address with The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP Treasurer of Australia

Over the last two years we have provided strong support and advocacy for our business community. We are in contact with businesses of all industries daily, ensuring that we are well informed of current issues and impacts. Throughout COVID this has allowed us to provide timely and accurate feedback to Government, supported by examples on the impacts of COVID, restrictions and current conditions. We strongly advocated for better processes for lockdowns and roadmaps out and eligibility of grants and support.

We recognised the efforts of business leaders in the community in the 2021 Golden Crow Awards running Outstanding Business Leader and Outstanding Young Business Leader categories. Our Outstanding Young Business Leader category was one of our most popular categories receiving one of the highest number of applications. Judges for the category said that two of the finalists were inseparable and we announced two young business leaders Joshua Paul and Damon Schmetzer. Emma Grant took out the Outstanding Business Leader category. Emma Grant and Joshua Paul both went on to become finalists at the Murray Riverina Regional Business Awards.

We are proud of what we offer as a Chamber and our accomplishments over the last few years and in 2021 we were recognised as a finalist for Outstanding Local Chamber at the Murray Riverina Regional Business Awards also.

OBJECTIVE 8

Provide networking opportunities to meet and collaborate with other local businesses

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

8.1 Chamber to coordinate events open to all businesses to attend



8.2 Roll out targeted retail education events / workshops to increase retail growth and digital capacity



8.3 Deliver the following calendar of Events:

- New Member Welcome Breakfast
- Drop in Drinks
- Business Before Hours
- Business After Hours
- Golden Crow Awards Cocktail Party
- Golden Crow Awards
- Christmas Party



OBJECTIVE 8

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Despite the interruptions over the last two years due to COVID we have still run 60 events over the last two years, with over half of these delivered face-to-face. All events are open to the wider community to ensure everyone has an opportunity to network, collaborate, learn and be informed.

The Golden Crow Awards is the biggest event that we hold annually. This event is designed to recognise the achievements of business and business leaders in our community. Not only do the awards provide recognition for applicants we also see several businesses go on to represent Wagga Wagga in the Murray Riverina Regional Awards and even on to the State Awards.

In 2020, due to the restriction in place we made the decision to host our annual Golden Crow Awards online hosting an abbreviated version. The streamed event saw celebratory functions being held across the City, with venues, caterers and musicians being booked. The online streaming reached over 60,000 people watching either live or over the proceeding weeks. For the first time we let the community vote receiving over 14,000 votes.

In 2021 we planned for the return of our Golden Crow Awards live. We sold over 300 tickets to the events, our largest attendance to date. Despite all efforts and after postponing our event once we went into lockdown and once again hosted the event online. We streamed the event live on Facebook reaching over 23,500 people on the day.

Our New Member Welcome breakfast continue to be a valuable way for our members to engage and meet other like-minded businesses. It is a great opportunity for them to get to meet representatives of the Chamber and hear about what we are working on.

Our Drop in Drinks are held once a month and are a great networking opportunity for anyone who wants to engage and network with the community. The event is becoming increasingly popular attracting non-members, new businesses and businesses from outside of the City.

We are still in the process of returning to our regular Business Breakfasts and Business After Hours events post COVID, however the ones we have been able to host over the past two years have featured a variety of businesses and topics featuring education providers, recreational services, business services and infrastructure and government services.


In the absence of being able to host events due to restrictions, we have run webinars covering topics such as transitioning to work from Home, business planning, operating online, mental health, job keeper and accounting software and Commonwealth Business Support.

Whilst we have a calendar of regular events, we have also run events to focus on specific topics, our Small Business Month event which focused on helping businesses in digital marketing providing them with tips and tricks they could use to build their brand. We also partnered with the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network to deliver Suicide Prevention training within the community.

OBJECTIVE 9

Promote activities and opportunities that showcase opportunities for start-ups in the region

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

9.1 Support and actively participate on any innovation or entrepreneurial committees or initiatives 

9.2 Promote the Chamber as "start-up friendly" 

9.3 Develop at least four case studies that showcase local startups 

9.4 Have a Golden Crow Award especially dedicated to those that have recently started a business: "Startup Superstar". 

OBJECTIVE 9

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

As an inclusive organisation we actively promote the Chamber as being open to all businesses of all industries and size and we have a diverse membership that supports this.

Our alliance with Business NSW means that we are able to offer our members free legal, workplace relations and marketing advice which has helped members with activities such as commercial leases and hiring staff.

In March 2020 we partnered with AgriTech Incubator, Pointer Remote Roles, Sauce Communications and Spaces by Working Spaces HQ to host the Riverina Innovation Ecosystem Meetup. This online event for start-ups and SMEs in the Riverina was designed to provide support, resources, tools and opportunities for these businesses during COVID.

In September 2020 we partnered with the Australian Tax office to run a series of webinars for people wanting to set up a business and wanting to run a business from home.

We have partnered with the Charles Sturt University Agritech incubator and promote programs such as Ready to Launch, helping individuals to take their business ideas into execution using Lean start-up initiatives.

Charles Sturt University Agritech Incubator sponsored the Golden Crow Awards category of Outstanding Start-up for the last two years. With Visual Dreaming taking out the Award in 2020 and Prefabulous taking out the Award in 2021. Prefabulous went on to becoming a finalist in the Murray Riverina Business Awards and winning their category and further becoming a finalist at the NSW Business Awards. These awards have not only provided recognition local but provided them opportunities for collaboration and growth as well as presenting Wagga Wagga as a place for Start-ups at a regional and state level.

The Outstanding Start Up category was one of the highest subscribed categories in terms of applications with feedback from the judges being that it was a highly competitive field.

While we are lucky enough to have a lot of great support for start-up locally and we connect businesses to these frequently we acknowledge that there are still gaps in support and last year the Chamber auctioned off a painting at the Christmas part with the proceeds to go towards a new initiative for Start-ups to be launched in 2022. The painting directly supported local start-up and artist Maggie Deall who is part of the Eastern Riverina Arts Renew Wagga initiative and the painting was sold for \$4,000.

OBJECTIVE 10

Create a sustainable environment for future generations

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TASKS

10.1 Actively demonstrate sustainable practices



10.2 Promote energy saving initiatives through the Crow Awards program by giving the business community the opportunity to participate in the "excellence in sustainability" award category. This allows leaders in this field to showcase their initiatives and act as an example to the business community.



10.3 Through the NSW Business Chamber, offer businesses and consumers the opportunity to conduct a free energy comparison through programs such as "Make it Cheaper"



OBJECTIVE 10

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

The Chamber considers itself leaders in the business community and promote the quadruple bottom line to businesses for consideration, acknowledging that all businesses have a social, environmental, economic and leadership role to play within our community. This transfers to our own decision-making including procurement.

In early 2020 the Chamber partnered with Pitt & Sherry for an event to promote the NSW DPIE Bin Trim program, demonstrating to businesses how they can improve waste management in their business. The program provides free help to support businesses assisting them to maximise their recycling and minimising waste to landfill.

Due to COVID restrictions the 2020 Crow Awards did not proceed as planned with a reduction in the number of award categories, however in 2021 the Excellence in Sustainability Award categories was award to St Vincent de Paul for their 'Return and Earn' Container Deposit Scheme.

During November and December 2020, the Chamber commissioned an Energy comparison campaign to our members via Business Australia. It is estimated that the campaign has saved local businesses approximately \$11,000 from the comparisons.