Business WODONGA

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104 Hovell Street
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Tuesday March 12, 2024

Re: Business Wodonga Feedback on Draft Economic Development Strategy

The Leadership and Operations Teams of Business Wodonga thank-you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Council's Draft Economic Development Strategy.

You will find on the following five pages our feedback on this Strategy. Getting this Strategy right is vital for Wodonga as a growing city, and we trust that you will take our considered and team agreed response into account before adopting the Strategy as it is currently exists in Draft form.

Yours faithfully,

Graham Jenkin
Chief Executive Officer

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Response to Draft Economic Strategy.

Economic Development summary
Business Wodonga's Leadership Team has conducted a thorough review of the Draft Economic Development Strategy. We are of the opinion that the strategy requires revision to enhance its focus, depth, and to include performance measures that are more precisely aligned with the objectives presented.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage in a detailed discussion with relevant staff and councillors from City of Wodonga regarding the Draft Economic Development Strategy, to provide a more in-depth perspective than what is encapsulated in this submission.

Below is an analysis of each section we have identified as necessitating commentary. Where identical information recurs within the Draft Economic Development Strategy, we have noted that these points will be addressed later in our submission.

2.5 Macroeconomic context
We assert that some of the external economic factors identified on pages 13 and 14 are related to short-term issues, which, although relevant in the near term, may diminish in relevance over the medium to long term. Examples such as fluctuations in cost-of-living pressures demonstrate this point, as these can shift significantly within a few months if the broader national economic trends were to alter.

It is proposed Council gives greater consideration to long-term factors which will impact the economic viability of the area, such as availability and efficiency of essential services, high-quality and well-maintained infrastructure and transport networks, access to and availability of land for future growth and development, improved health-care services and sustainability and climate resilience, etc.

5.4 Economic Opportunities
Economic Opportunities outlined on page 22 is too broad or does not contain enough information. We make comment on each of the outlined Economic Opportunities as follows:

- *Continue to develop and improve access to Logic precinct to attract industry investment.* – Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity.

- *Capitalise on Junction Place project to attract commercial (ie. retail, entertainment, hospitality) and mixed-use developments.* - This is a very broad statement. Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity, however, fails to understand within this document how Wodonga Council plans to harness this opportunity.

- *Leverage the pipeline of major private and public infrastructure projects to support economic growth and attract flow-on business investment.* - This is a very broad statement. Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity,

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however, fails to understand within this document how Wodonga Council plans to harness this opportunity.

- *Strategically plan for development infrastructure (eg. water) to service zoned land in order to attract industry and residential investment.* - Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity, noting Wodonga Councils reliance on other stakeholders to deliver this Economic Opportunity.

- *Support infill residential development on existing serviced land to accommodate residents and workers.* - This is a very broad statement with little explanation of when or how this will be achieved.

- *Activate state-owned land within the CBA to expand the range of commercial precincts.* – This is a very broad statement. Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity, however, fails to understand within this document how Wodonga Council plans to harness this opportunity.

- *Collaboration with the private sector and higher education to support training and employment pathways* - It is the view of Business Wodonga that this is not an area that Wodonga Council should be focusing.

- *Commercialise research and development resources across higher education facilities to support the attraction of future (and emerging) industries, such as advanced manufacturing* – This is broad and hard to understand. Business Wodonga believes that this needs to be rewritten and have Project Opportunities directly related to this economic opportunity.

- *Support the events sector, focusing on community and sporting events, to promote resident wellbeing and grow the visitor economy.* - This is a very broad statement. Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity, however, fails to understand within this document how Wodonga Council plans to harness this opportunity.

- *Grow ecosystem of organisations involved in defence-related activity, including support services, manufacturing and research.* - This is a very broad statement. Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity, however, fails to understand within this document how Wodonga Council plans to harness this opportunity.

- *Collaborate with regional, state and national entities (including government and private sector) to support investment priorities and achieve economic and employment outcomes.* - This is a very broad statement. Business Wodonga agrees in principle with this economic opportunity, however, fails to understand within this document how Wodonga Council plans to harness this opportunity.

- *Activate Gateway Village through the development of contemporary arts and culture product, to support community and lifestyle outcomes.* – This statement fails to provide rational for Economic Development outcomes for Wodonga.

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Pillar 2 Areas of Focus

We make the following observations regarding Pillar 2 – Areas of Focus on page 27 of the report.

High-amenity activity centres and shopping precincts. - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.
Placemaking - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.
Business Development and productivity - Business Wodonga believe this needs to be more specific to be supported. We believe that this is the role of Business Wodonga and other local stakeholders, not Wodonga Council. Should this initiative be supported by council, we believe that the only role Wodonga Council should take is by providing funding to an external party like Business Wodonga to undertake training.

Pillar 3 Regional Lifestyle

We make the following observations regarding Pillar 3 – Areas of Focus on page 27 of the report.

Accessible and high-quality services - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported. We question the role the Economic Development team will play in this space.
Community and recreation infrastructure - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.
Diverse housing infrastructure - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.

6.4 Economic development project opportunities.

We make the following observations regarding 6.4 Economic development project opportunities on pages 28 to 33 of the report.

1. We believe that many of the Economic Opportunities listed in 6.4 are outside of councils' area of expertise or influence. We believe that many of the project opportunities lack depth.

Project 1 – Business Wodonga supports this project opportunity.
Project 2 - Business Wodonga supports this project opportunity.
Project 3 – Business Wodonga supports this project opportunity.
Project 4 – Business Wodonga believe this needs to be more specific to be supported.
Project 5 - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.

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Project 6 - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.
Project 7 – Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.
Project 8 - Business Wodonga believe this needs to be more specific to be supported.
Project 9 - Business Wodonga believe this needs to be more specific to be supported. We believe that this is the role of Business Wodonga and other local stakeholders, not Wodonga Council. Should this initiative be supported by council, we believe that the only role Wodonga Council should take is providing funding to an external party like Business Wodonga to undertake training. The Australian Government's Department of Employment & Workforce Relations Local Jobs Program Employment Facilitator should be included as a key stakeholder.
Project 10 - Business Wodonga supports this project opportunity to ensure "trunk" infrastructure has adequate planning on all levels for the expansion of both residential and industrial developments.
Project 11 - Business Wodonga believe this needs to be more specific to be supported. Again, as above with Project 9. This is the role of other stakeholders, should Council believe that this is important, they should fund external stakeholders like Business Wodonga to undertake the work.
Project 12 - Business Wodonga supports some of the concept however needs more information to be fully supported. We cannot support any action by Wodonga Council that could have potential planning implications.
Project 13- Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.
Project 14 - Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported. We cannot support any action by Wodonga Council that could have potential planning implications.
Project 15- Business Wodonga supports the concept however needs more information to be fully supported.

Indicative performance measures and monitoring tools.
We believe that the Indicative performance measures and monitoring tools need to be reviewed tools outlined in pages 34 & 35. We ask that a better use of directly affected lead, lag, qualitative and quantitative measure be selected that allow Wodonga rate paying business to better assess the performance of councils' efforts in Economic Development.
Several indicators might be seen as taking credit for efforts one did not initially advocate for or contribute to.
On page 34 & 35 of the document where Indicative performance measures and monitoring tools are listed, we make the following suggestions.

- *Increase in public infrastructure investment* - could be re-written as Increase in public infrastructure investment that was initiated by Wodonga Council.

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- *Increase in supply of serviced employment and residential land* – This cannot be directly measured back to the performance of Wodonga Council.

- *Increase in investment enquiries for commercial and industrial businesses* – This could be re-written to number of businesses not already situated in Wodonga targeted and met by Wodonga Council on an annual basis.

- *Growth in the volume of large businesses (ie. 200+ employees)* – This could be rewritten as a lag indicator to the above. Being number of large businesses originally targeted and met by Wodonga Council that established their business in Wodonga.

- *Growth in business-related activities (including expos, business events, conferences, etc.)* – This could be rewritten as number of/attendance at expos and conferences run directly by Wodonga Council.

- *Growth in volume of exports and trade* - This cannot be directly measured back to the performance of Wodonga Council.

- *Increase in local consumption* - This cannot be directly measured back to the performance of Wodonga Council.

- *Increase in the number and frequency of public transport services* - This cannot be directly measured back to the performance of Wodonga Council.

- *Increase in working-aged residents* - This cannot be directly measured back to the performance of the Wodonga Council.

- *Increase in labour force participation rates and local employment* - This cannot be directly measured back to the performance of Wodonga Council.

- *Growth in housing supply and housing diversity* - This cannot be directly measured back to the performance of Wodonga Council.

- Investment in community and recreation infrastructure

- *Improvements in community satisfaction (via surveys/ primary research)* - This cannot be directly measured back to the performance in respect to Economic Development within Wodonga Council.