



# FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

*Briefing Report*

**Working together to create a more vibrant  
Weekend City Centre for Lismore**

Prepared for

**Lismore City Council**

**Economic Development Unit**

Molesworth Street

LISMORE NSW

Prepared by

**Lighthouse**

**Marketing & Projects**

Consultant: Jane Lavery

M: 0412 647 002

# Contents

## Focus Group Meetings

Introduction	2
Place - Lismore City Centre	2
City Centre maps – key destinations	3
Methodology	4
Participation	4

## Focus Group Reports (in order of occurrence)

Business women	5
Mature age – go getters	7
Community (General 1)	10
Tourism Operators	13
Business Operators	16
People with differing abilities	19
Community (General 2)	22
Youth	26

## Focus Group Conclusion 29

## Priorities matrix

## Attachment 1

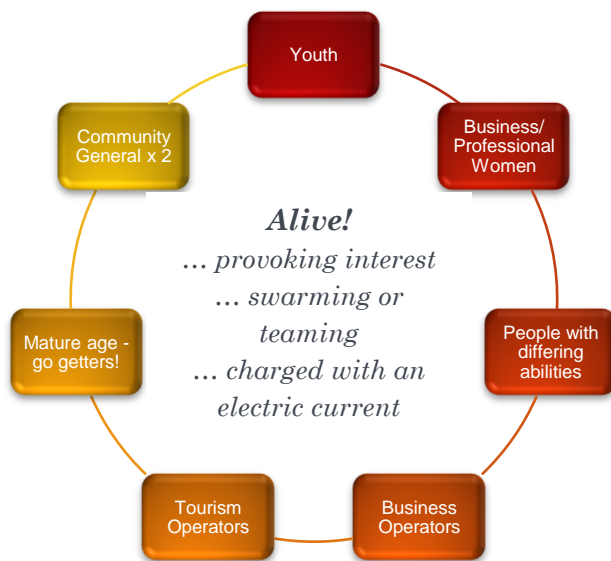
# FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

## Introduction

Lighthouse Marketing & Projects has been engaged by the Lismore Economic Development Unit to undertake a series of focus groups with a cross section of the community.

The focus groups have been designed to assist in the gathering of thoughts and ideas held by the community that would help to enhance the environment and atmosphere of the Lismore City Centre, particularly on weekends.

The following sectors were identified and a series of focus groups have been undertaken:



Group	Date
Business Women	16/12/08
Mature age – go getters!	20/02/09
Community (general 1)	23/02/09
Tourism Operators	24/02/09
Business Operators	24/02/09
People with differing abilities	5/03/09
Community (general 2)	17/03/09
Youth	18/03/09

Two workshops are also proposed to follow the focus group meetings to present the findings and results of the surveys and feedback from the focus groups.

## Place - Lismore City Centre

The City Centre is approximately 20km<sup>2</sup>, bordered on the west by the Wilsons River/Molesworth Street. Lismore Square on the Eastern border, south to Ballina Road and as far north as the greyhound track on Orion street.

Lismore (Local Government Area) has a population of close to 44,000 people with 66.3% of people living in the urban areas and approximately 27.7% of residents choosing to live in the rural and hinterland areas.

Analysis of the age structure of the Shire indicates that the area has a median age of 35.1 years of age with 13.7% of the population over 65 years and 19.9% between 15 and 24 years of age.

Lismore is home to many significant attractions and places of interest including major events such as the Lismore Lantern Parade, World Heritage Sites and icons such as Nimbin. Bordering Shires include the Ballina Shire, Richmond Valley, Byron Shire and Kyogle with Lismore providing many key regional services from the City Centre precinct.

## City Centre area – key destinations



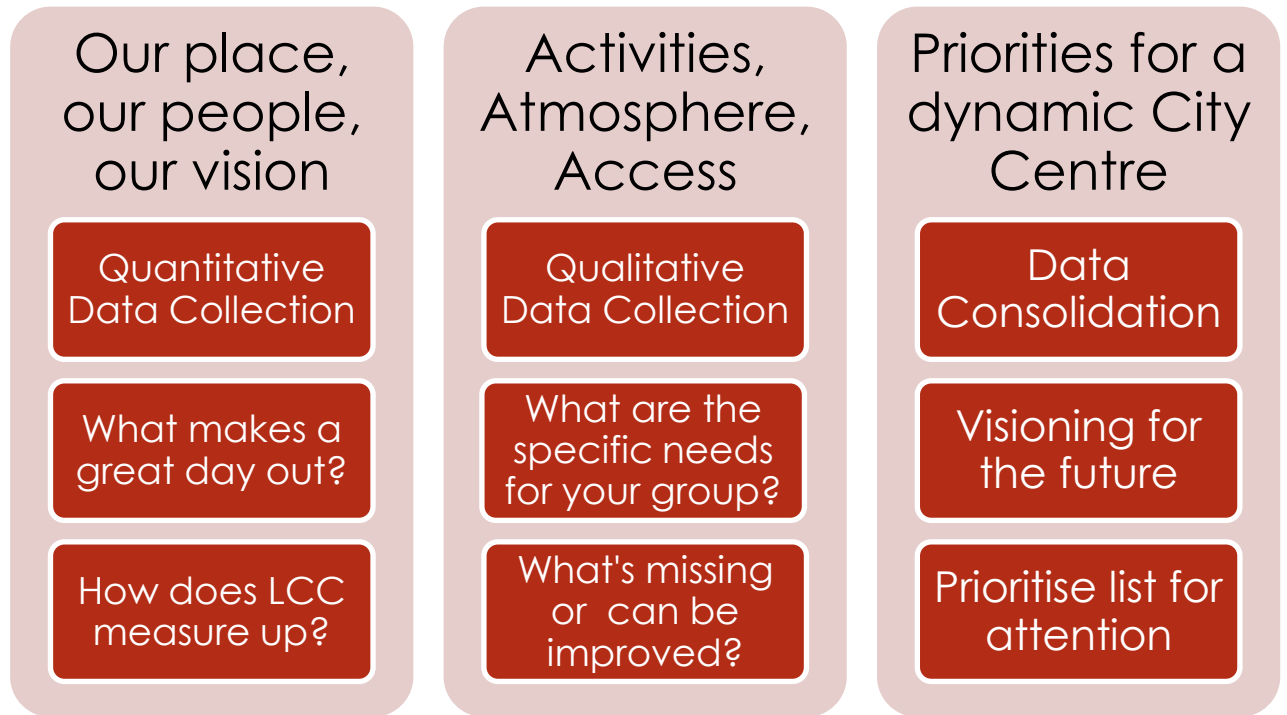
1. Boat ramp
2. Riverside Park
3. Heritage Park/Visitor Information Centre
4. Pool
5. City Hall
6. Neighborhood Centre
7. Workers Club
8. Star Court
9. C-Block (Conservatorium and Library)
10. Court House
11. Cinema
12. Council's CBD Centre
13. Art Gallery/Museum
14. Lismore Square
15. Oakes Oval
16. Hospital
17. Racecourse
18. Speedway



The CBD Block – Molesworth, Woodlark, Keen and Magellan Streets

Where time permitted, focus groups were asked to list places in the City Centre that already attract high numbers of people to the City Centre, the above map has collated this information.

## Focus Group Methodology



## Participation

A total of 56 people participated in the focus group meetings. A number of other people, who were unable to make the meetings, provided input via email, this information was included with the appropriate focus group. Participants were invited to provide their contact details for further communication and updates on the project. A short survey was also conducted to provide feedback on the focus group process including areas such as venue, facilitation and provision of information. Positive feedback about the consultation process was received.



A community of ideas

# Focus Group – Business Women

## Group overview

Business Women are consummate jugglers of time and activity. In general terms they are usually running a home, working extended hours, doing something for the community - whether it's volunteering or helping out in the school canteen. They are shoppers who love variety and choice, good service and good coffee and they place importance on safety, accessible clean toilets and a great atmosphere when looking for a public place to be on weekends.

## Assessment of Lismore City Centre

### What we love

Overall the group was very positive about the Lismore City Centre potential and they are advocates for improvements to enhance its attractiveness. As they see it, our strengths include:

- Friendliness and service
- River access – beautification is fantastic
- Left Bank – Art Gallery
- New pool
- Great arcades – ‘Laneways with Cafés - very Melbourne like’
- Keen Street Cinema
- Good hair & beauty salons, art supplies
- Love Peppertree Kitchen
- Lantern Parade – a wonderful event
- Lismore Cup Day
- Sporting facilities are well kept and clean
- NORPA (with improved marketing)

“Great arcades - our laneways with cafés are very Melbourne like”

### What needs improvement or is missing

A number of areas were identified for improvement or attention. At the centre of these suggestions was the need for Lismore to project a sense of prosperity when people drive into the City (like Armidale/Clarence). Improvements or what is missing include:

- Restaurants on the River and a boardwalk to make the most of such a great asset.
- Improved pathways/bike path along the River – go all the way.

“Restaurants on the River ... making the most of such a great asset”

## Business Women cont...

- Extended shopping hours – to cater for business community that would like to shop or go to cafés after work.
- Increased shade areas and widening of footpaths in some streets.
- Clean up graffiti (some 25 yrs old) and improve unity in shop fronts (particularly Molesworth Street). Would like to see a more consistent presentation of shop fronts.
- Upgrade City Hall – possible function centre (like Narrabri have).
- Farmers market on a Saturday morning (block off Magellan and Carrington Sts).
- A more sophisticated transport system – a city service to match our city name. Transport needs to be affordable and regular with numerous access points (link to Goonellabah).
- Improve marketing and promotion (event communication).

### Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre

1. Access to good, clean bathroom/toilets/baby change facilities.
2. Improved parking – a central multilevel car park (happy to pay up to \$10 per day.)
3. Restaurants/café's with good healthy food encouraged to establish on the River.
4. Clean up graffiti and improve shop facades (particularly those that are dilapidated), footpaths and the state of important buildings eg City Hall. Possibly engage an architect to propose a style.
5. Fresh local produce markets in Magellan Street (barrows).
6. Larger and improved art gallery (combination of Tweed and Grafton Galleries).
7. Bike track with bike hire and bike stands.

“... a central multi-level car park ...”

“... clean up graffiti and improve shop fronts...”

# Focus Group – Mature Age ‘Go Getters’

## Group overview

Wise and experienced, the Mature Age ‘Go Getter’ has a plethora of sound and practical opinions about what a ‘town’ or ‘city’ like Lismore needs, however this Group (on the whole) were keen to keep what they say is a ‘well kept secret’ – well secret.

A common thread with the Mature Age Go Getter is an appreciation for the arts and music, being immersed in nature, good coffee and great customer service. They enjoy ‘good food’ markets, people watching and being surrounded by lots of activity and energy. For most it’s a sense of place that they are attracted to, however they relinquish that on the weekends there is a lack of ‘things to do’ that would attract them into the City Centre.

## Assessment of Lismore City Centre

### What we love

This was a passionate group, and for the majority Lismore City Centre is seen as the heart beat – that just needs a little more oxygen pumping through. As they see it, our strengths include:

- Unpretentious people/community
- NORPA
- Art Gallery
- Open Air Cinema
- Star Court Theatre
- Movies/Cinemas
- Neighbourhood Centre
- Wilsons River
- Arcades and Laneways
- The Block – Keen, Magellan, Carrington, Molesworth Streets.
- Library
- The trees in Magellan Street
- Being a ‘service centre’
- The ‘Kindest City’ – companionship, joy and connection
- Spinks Park (free clean toilets)
- Croquet Club
- We have graffiti removed immediately

“It’s the people  
that make Lismore  
great – we’re  
unpretentious!”

## Mature Age 'Go Getters' cont...

### What needs improvement or is missing

A real mix between facilities and activity-drivers were unearthed by our Go Getters. This dynamic group presented extremely constructive ideas for overcoming some of the barriers to 'getting things done' and generating interest back into the City Centre. The missing ingredients and improvements include;

- Opening the Art Gallery on the Weekend
- Improve maintenance - overgrown Riverbank vegetation
- Remove rubbish quicker
- More seats and shade in the streets (with strategic placement).
- Walking trails
- A fabulous outdoor environment – a speaker's corner, outdoor music showcasing diverse and differing styles.
- Be innovative – establish a 'buzz'.
- Markets – food markets (not just organic). Make Carrington Street a Public Precinct for markets – night markets.
- Potential for market holders to cluster – in hard top shops(help solve vacancies)
- Increased public art - with a maintenance budget to go with it.
- Encourage the community to 'Smile' – it was noted that it can be a bit dreary on the street.
- Raise the bar on civic pride – areas on the fringe of the CBD are very unkempt.
- A greater aesthetics focus – improve building infrastructure eg gutters on shops, shop and street facades, pavements. Establish a task force to identify improvements and also assist landholders and tenants with ideas for improved shop fronts, window displays etc.
- Improve collaborative marketing between the retailers and other businesses in the City Centre to promote the destination - as per the Square.
- Look at creating branding and identity for the City Centre.
- Improve the connection between the CBD and Council.
- Improved and facilitated networking opportunities for businesses.
- Improve transport and safety across the City.
- Piped music around the street when there is an event on – or all the time to improve the atmosphere.

“Increase public art  
– with a  
maintenance  
budget to go  
with it”

“Improve  
collaborative  
marketing ... look at  
branding the  
destination”

## Mature Age 'Go Getters' cont...

- Create a 'family friendly' weekend City Centre – mini marathons, pet competitions, activities, buskers and music performances.
- Introduce 'living history' performances (invite theatre groups to participate). Could also encourage a business to take up horse drawn carriage business – country feel in the City.
- International food festival (we have many cultures with incredible diversity within our community – we should celebrate this)
- Energise the people/community to come out and participate.
- Make more of the Laneways
- Allow and encourage shop top accommodation - residential living in the City Centre. Council to assist with examining regulations around this and ways of making it more accessible.

“International Food Festival – celebrate our diversity of cultures living in Lismore”

### Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre

1. More seats and shade in the streets.
2. A place/precinct for outdoor music and entertainment (Carrington Street or on the River). This should have a focus on bringing families into the City Centre – entertainment and activities to attract them.
3. Encourage residential living in the City Centre – Council to lead and facilitate.
4. Marketing and promotion that is collaborative and effective.
5. Improvements to infrastructure – particularly buildings.
6. Markets – food and creative products locally sourced (as per 100 Mile Markets)
7. Increase activities along the banks of the River and within Riverbank precinct eg tai chi, bands, more festivals, outdoor cinema.



100 Mile Market



“We need a family focus – with an outdoor precinct for music and entertainment”

# Focus Group – Community (General 1)

## Group overview

Community minded and happy to input into what is important to them and will also benefit the broader population, this group was quick to acknowledge our arts and cultural strengths, and our living examples of sustainability.

Varying backgrounds and experiences in other locations outside of the Region also informed discussion. A mix of working, self educating and retired participants also allowed many perspectives to be communicated and appreciated by the broader group.

There was also a strong sense of 'living up' to our brand as the Rainbow Region and celebrating our diversity as people and as a place. When venturing out for the day issues of great importance included sufficient public transport and access to free clean toilets, areas for relaxing and enjoying live music or entertainment that are 'non consumer spaces' with all weather options.

## Assessment of Lismore City Centre

### What we love

A clear representation of the group could be found in what they contributed to the 'best things' about the Lismore City Centre, which included:

- The River
- Culture trail
- The People – diverse, accepting and tolerant
- The community - they will support people in need
- Friendlier than many other places
- A good place for people on a lower than average income
- Community festivals eg – Lantern Parade, Northern Rivers Herb festival, Tropical Fruit Festival (NYE)
- Laneways and their future potential
- NORPA – outdoor performance would be great
- Museum – however no disable access and should be the whole building
- Library – and it is open on a Sunday (very successful) particularly love the Living Library.
- Conservatorium
- Tip(waste centre) – worm farm

“Community festivals are important and attract people from outside the area.”

## Community (General 1) cont...

- The sustainable practices of the community
- Breadth of creative arts industry and people involved

### What needs improvement or is missing

Very focused around creating public places for recreation and activity the group was able to identify specific locations within the City greater for use and what they should be used for. The two key locations included Magellan Street around to Carrington Street for a markets or entertainment/cultural precinct - "Life on the Street".

Also on the list as missing or areas for improvement that would attract more people into the City Centre included:

- Shop top residential living with exhibition and gallery space below and living above.
- Extended opening hours particularly for restaurants and cafes
- More seats and shade areas (dedicated areas of grouped seats that are non commercial)
- Improved collaboration between Council and the arts/creative community.
- Open the Art Gallery/museum on Sundays
- Find ways to increase safety – allow more people to live in city, businesses will have trade, more people will be around and safety will improve.
- More/better laneway usage – event based, markets
- Communication – Council/Community/Marketing/Promotion (install and encourage the use of community noticeboards or ideas wall
- Series of summer outdoor cinemas – free at Riverside Park
- Public Art – interactive in nature, that will draw contributions from across the community.
- A fitness circuit – walking, bikes etc. Build a pedestrian/bike bridge between two existing bridges
- Friday night "arts & food market" and alcohol free spaces
- Greater support for community groups and their efforts to carry out projects ie insurance and funding issues
- Improve accessibility for pedestrians – roundabouts can be hazardous
- Showcase environmental sustainability practices – Lismore to be seen as a model
- Support from landowners to collaborate and improve premises
- Encourage community gardens

"Shop top residential living to increase trade, improve safety and create vibrancy."

"Showcase our environmental sustainability practices as a model."

## Community (General 1) cont...

- Support and improve 'Civic Pride' – maintenance of park spaces, footpath quality, and drainage.
- Improve streetscape cohesiveness – aesthetics of buildings
- Revitalise the Café & Culture trail – and make sure that cafes are open.
- Address the public transport issue – see this as a public service and a way to improve environmental sustainability.
- Possibility of a parking station out of CBD to remove traffic.
- Town Centre Manager needs to be in a shop front and be someone with an artistic and creative ability as well as able to motivate shop keepers to improve presentation.
- Acknowledgement of our history
- Improve and facilitate better collaboration between landholders, tenants, Council and the Community. Don't let buildings/shops go to waste by being unoccupied.

“An outdoor arts and culture precinct is essential to improving the City Centre.”

### Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre

1. Arts and Entertainment precinct established in outdoor location that could be used for markets, performances, showcasing local artists etc. Need to market and promote space.
2. Increase public art. Interactive arts projects with an invitation for community to participate.
3. Residential living to be assisted above shops with gallery space at the street level.
4. Greater communication - particularly for events and attractions.
5. Foster greater civic pride with improved maintenance of public places eg parks and footpaths.
6. Obtain support from landowners to improve building maintenance and external improvements that are in keeping with the décor ie art deco period
7. Create non-commercial spaces for people to sit and to get together, eg; near the Conservatorium and Library.

“Create spaces for people to sit and get together that are not commercial.”

## Focus Group – Tourism

### Group overview

Being at the coal face of the industry, tourism operators are best informed as to the needs of visitors to Lismore. Sporting events, family functions, medical or specialist appointments, holidays and short stays attract many visitors to the City per annum and inject vital retail and tourism spending into the economy.

The focus that emerged from this group was a clearly identified need for collaboration and communication within the industry and with those who provide value added services such as restaurants, cafes and event organizers. Their vision for the City included the development of high end lifestyle events and cultural and artistic areas drawing on the strengths of the abundant local creative industry.

The Group represented decades of local industry experience in catering to the tourism market through accommodation, cafés and restaurants.

However, as individuals within the community there was a shared vision for what makes a great day out. Centrally located facilities and opportunities for adventure and discovery rate highly, as does good food with plenty of venues to choose from. Along with areas for entertainment, that will attract families, in a relaxed and safe atmosphere, they like walking tracks and an opportunity to celebrate our cultural diversity specifically in the areas of food and art.

## Assessment of Lismore City Centre

### What we love

Not surprisingly, conversation with group was 'place' specific with a focus on service and attractions to include;

- Architecture
- Flat landscape
- Art gallery
- Diversity and standard of restaurants
- The River – proximity to CBD
- University – creative elements, music, art
- NORPA
- Lantern Parade
- Amphitheatre by the River
- Geographic proximity – central to so many experiences
- Health and education – services centre
- Lower rents

“Our geographic proximity to so many experiences means we're central to it all”.

### ***Focus Group – Tourism cont...***

- Art nooks
- Bookshops – second hand shops

- Affordable destination leading to the developing creative industries cluster

### What needs improvement or is missing

Sourced from experience with visitors to the Region and years of liaising with frustrated weekend visitors, the group was able to clearly and quickly articulate areas for improvement or addition to our city landscape. Their wish list included:

- Improved communication as to who is trading on weekends and their opening times
- CBD has it's back to the river – encourage greater river activity
- Address safety issues along the riverwalk
- Encourage University involvement in the City Centre – better connection and participation
- Establish an entertainment area with bands in the streets, lots of music – Carrington Street would be great
- We need more youth focused venues/events/activities – encourage a Timezone or Intensity to open.
- Increase access to and awareness of pool of local talent, performers, street artists, musicians – establish a register for people in the creative industry
- Encourage a Local Growers and Creative Artists Market – energy in street
- Set up markets so they are different from what is being offered everywhere else. Create a demand – only have 20 – 30 spaces available and call for tenders. Set up the shade covers with a unified look.
- Hold street carnivals in the City Centre
- “Lismore’s Got Talent” – run a competition for local musicians on the block.
- We need a whole of CBD approach with collaborative marketing and branding.
- We are not leveraging the available creative resource.
- Art Gallery – install lift and utilize the whole building. Support the work of volunteers.

“We need more youth venues and activities – like a Timezone or Intensity”.

“Encourage and showcase Indigenous performances and tours”.

### **Focus Group – Tourism cont...**

- Make more of our “Melbourne Laneways”

- Encourage shop top residencies
- Organised, well promoted weekend events
- Temporary street artists space
- Regular outdoor cinema
- Encourage/enable Indigenous performers and Indigenous tours (include mentored business development assistance).
- Scenic walk/bike path along railway lines
- Expansion of sports market using local identities
- Encourage venues to host social events, competitions, tournaments - creates sense of fun and community
- We need more venues – diversity
- Improve street lighting – particularly outskirts of CBD
- Create change in the perception of safety in the CBD
- Look for something to differentiate us from other places - young designers market

### **Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre**

1. Markets that can be differentiated from everything else in the Northern Rivers. Make the look and feel unified and up-market.
2. Connect our identity with some of our young local rising sports and arts stars – possible patrons of the City Centre.
3. Establish an entertainment area – with local bands allowed and encouraged to perform in the street.
4. A series of organized well promoted weekend events in the City Centre. Upgrade Art Gallery.
5. Make more of the Laneways – one laneway a year as a combined community project. Different themes.
6. Encourage a large youth attraction – even if it is commercial such as Timezone or Intensity.
7. Address safety and maintenance issues.

“Connect our identity with young local arts and sports stars – possible patrons of the City Centre.”

## **Focus Group – Business General**

Group overview

Hard working and passionate about the future of the City Centre, this group were advocates for Lismore as a place to bring up a family and run a successful business. A common thread was a desire to balance life and work commitments, something they believe can be achieved living in Lismore.

Given how hectic a business week can be, the ability to find space to relax, unwind and enjoy the company of others, if you want to, or choose to take a stroll through the park (with just your own mind for company) is certainly desirable. Value for money and good service are considered important as are safe and clean facilities. Atmosphere is the key for this group – if a 'place' has this, it will attract people from all aspects of the community and beyond.

### **What we love**

The group was quick to rattle off the names of over a dozen independent retail shops located in the CBD area of the City Centre for their uniqueness and good service. The City Centre also rated high on the following:

- The Riverbank area – outdoor cinema
- Festivals and Events – especially the Lantern Parade and also Carols by Candlelight.
- The Block – different to a lot of 'main streets'.
- High percentage of locally owned and managed businesses. They are free to make decisions, rather than a head office mentality. This means they are more receptive to community needs.
- Good quantity and quality of arts and cultural places eg art gallery, Museum and NORPA
- Good restaurants – variety
- Great people – a sense of community

“The high percentage of locally owned and managed businesses.”

### **Focus Group – Business General cont...**

What needs improvement or is missing

A focus on effective marketing and communication practices was highlighted by the business group as an essential underpinning element to creating greater interest in the City Centre. There was a strong desire for 'something' to happen and happen quickly to create a positive future for the City Centre with the following areas identified to assist this process.

- Encourage non-event dining – eating out for the experience of good food (not just because a festival event is on).
- Create an environment that is not just work related.
- Make more of the Laneways (loft)
- The River is not utilized enough. Finish the walkway and bring rowing back into the City Centre end of town. Seeing people on the River rowing creates atmosphere.
- Find our USP and promote it well.
- Develop good marketing strategies
- Communicate when events are on. Find better ways to communicate what is happening in the City Centre to the Community.
- Attract projects that help us to create a sense of community.
- Address appropriate shopping hours – Thursday/Friday nights and Saturday afternoons. This should be incremental and a collaborative effort from all retailers and service businesses.
- We need a dynamic Chamber of Commerce – increase memberships and representation from a broader business group.
- Maintenance – clean pavers, fix gutters, improve facades
- More baby change rooms and decent serviced toilets (to compete with the Square).
- Work with landlords to keep rents affordable and look at ways to make the size and design of many of our retail spaces work better. Some premises are far too big for independent retailers. They could be halved – possibility for one half to face the street, the other half to face the laneway.
- Increase the powers/authority of security patrols.
- Give window space of vacant shops to local artists or community groups.

“Find our USP and promote it well”.

“More baby change rooms and clean accessible toilets”.

### **Focus Group – Business General cont...**

- Explore strategies to make rents more affordable to attract more retailers.

- Address car parking management – why are there so many restrictive time zones. People need more than 2 hours parking time.

### Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre

1. Address parking issues – longer term parking
2. Improve River usage – more activities, continue work along Riverbank.
3. Encourage businesses to extend trading hours on Thursday/Friday nights for business people and Saturday afternoons for families.
4. A collaborative effort from landlords, tenants and Council to address Civic Pride with better maintenance of footpaths, building and shop front windows.
5. More baby change rooms and decent serviced toilets (to compete with the Square).
6. Create and implement a good marketing strategy to address communications, promotions, branding and attracting more people to the City Centre.
7. Make more of the Laneways – they could be our differentiator in the Northern Rivers

“Parking management – longer term parking, 2 hours not enough time.”



Wilsons River and Riverbank parks

## Focus Group – People with differing abilities

Group overview

Our sincere thanks go to participants from Multi-task, a Lismore based training and support service for people with disabilities, for being part of this focus group.

The group was passionate about what they believe would attract them into the Lismore City Centre, however they were just as passionate about what would improve their lives and allow them to be more involved in their place which included improved transportation, affordable living, better access and safety.

A love of nightlife and shopping along with places to spend time with friends and family outdoors contribute to a great day out for many of the people in the group.

### Assessment of Lismore City Centre

#### What we love

The Cinemas/movies rated high, as did the bowling alley, skate rink and nightclubs. The group also agreed that our fantastic climate makes for a great opportunity to enjoy our open spaces, particularly by the River.

Other places and facilities for which the group rated highly include:

- Art Gallery and Museum (apart from the limited access)
- Left Bank Café
- Key services such as the hospital, Library and Centrelink.
- Shopping Square
- Cultural education (Harmony Day)
- The Riverbank area including the pathways
- Pool (also think that the Lake Pool is excellent)
- Diverse cultures of the people who live here
- Conservatorium of Music
- Lantern Parade
- Video Ezy DVD Rental store
- Workers Club (Discos).

“We love the nightclubs and outdoor areas near the River.”

### **Focus Group – People with differing abilities cont...**

What needs improvement or is missing

A mix between commercial improvements and civic improvements were noted by the group with a strong desire for improved transport and access for people with differing abilities and an increased focus on communication. The group felt that Council is a little disassociated with what is happening in the City Centre and with this they are unaware of the important factors associated with the needs of people who rely on ease of access and public transport.

- A greater level of security on the streets
- Additional street lights (particularly on the outskirts of the City Centre)
- Improved footpaths (ie Kmart to McDonald's -you have to walk through mud)
- Family orientated events – more festivals like the Lantern Parade, outdoor events (please consider wheel chair access and overall accessibility to seating, amenities and refreshments).
- More public toilets (clean toilets very important)
- Additional pedestrian crossing areas and pedestrian operated lights.
- Maintenance of paths and buildings to be improved and a general clean up of the City.
- Public transport – more buses and increase the number of taxi services with wheel chair access particularly on weekends. (Free taxi phones).
- Pedestrian access to public transport needs improving ie Spinks Park to railway station. A pedestrian/bike bridge would be great.
- Improve roads into the City Centre and road signs from surrounding areas back into the City and CBD. (Also fix 'dip outs' in car parks)
- Make the Cinema bigger or a Gold Class cinema
- More gardens to attract people.
- Public drinking fountains
- A restaurant like Sizzler
- Better ramp access into shops and wider doorways (this can be particularly difficult for blind people, even harder if they have a guide dog).
- Introduce markets on each Sunday in the City Centre (close the street off).
- Live music concerts and local performers.

“Make the Cinema bigger or turn it into a Gold Class Cinema – that would make Lismore different”.

### ***Focus Group – People with differing abilities cont...***

- Improve affordability for living in the City Centre. This is very important for single people who want to maintain their independence.
- The group also talked about affordability and accessibility in terms of undertaking courses with TAFE or ACE. They would like to go to evening courses but transport is too unreliable.
- Encourage community to stop the dumping of shopping trolleys
- The group also spoke about the need to improve communication regarding events and activities that are taking place in the City Centre.

### **Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre**

1. Improve the public transport situation with more buses and additional pick up points as well as taxis with wheel chair access.
2. Pedestrian access – pathways from key places of interest, more ramps, wider doorways into shops, install a lift in the Art Gallery/Museum.
3. Improved security and safety – more streetlights, designated 'safe places'.
4. Public amenities – more toilet facilities that are well maintained and install drinking fountains.
5. Address the issue of affordability – housing in the CBD from studio to 3 bedroom apartments to allow greater flexibility.
6. Entertainment – markets and outdoor festivals/cinema in the CBD. Would also like to see more cultural education as part of events.
7. Improve communications and marketing – better advertising in the local newspapers and radio

“Improve security and safety with more streetlights and 'safe places'.

Special mention: The group was also passionate about Lismore being a community of people who show respect for all individuals no matter their abilities or cultural backgrounds.

## **Focus Group – Community (General 2)**

Group overview

Experienced in the many facets of what makes a community tick this group of people, who are also proud to call the Lismore region home, were very practical in their ideas for improving the Lismore City Centre.

A mixture of backgrounds, some with young children and others with teenagers or grown up children who have now left home, provided a mix of needs and wants. In general terms, for a great day out they enjoy relaxing and being able to go to one place that appeals to the whole family. They want diverse options for recreation with stimulating experiences coupled with value for money and cultural depth.

The common thought across the group was the idea that to create a vibrant and dynamic City Centre you need people. With people taking part in activities and possibly living in the City Centre you will attract more people and with this create a level of safety that again attracts more people.

### Assessment of Lismore City Centre

#### What we love

The City's cultural offerings rated very highly with the group with NORPA, the Art Gallery, Museum and the Conservatorium listed among our greatest strengths. Other strengths include:

- Lantern Parade
- Wade Park
- Heritage Park
- Sporting grounds (used every weekend especially in Winter for soccer, netball, League and AFL)
- Open parklands
- The River
- Our people – so diverse. We have a high percentage of artistic people.
- Buskers
- Cinema and outdoor cinema – both great and real draw cards
- 'C' block – behind the Conservatorium and in front of the Library – this is a great place to sit and an ideal place for events and designated cultural space.
- The variety of shops and the fact that they are not generally national chains
- Heritage park and the train

“The Sporting grounds in the City Centre attract a lot of people on the weekends”.

### **Focus Group – Community (General 2)**

What needs improvement or is missing

An overriding sentiment that we are good at attracting a crowd but fall a little short in holding the crowd was strongly agreed by the group. The big draw card for Lismore is believed to be the River, with the group agreeing that more should be made of this City Centre asset.

- Ideas for more activity on the River include tour boat trips, paddle boats and Canoes/kayak hire.
- A wharf was also suggested as a way of attracting more people to the River - along with better marketing for River activity.
- Create a reason for people to go to the River area and spend time there – create an atmosphere and better amenities ie playground for kids, café etc.
- Piazza in the centre of the City with wine bars, restaurants and residential living
- Showcase our history in the City and along the Riverbank (historic tours would be great).
- Shade for the Riverbank areas – this will attract more people (work through strategies to balance competing interests).
- Identify and make use of a cultural space that will provide our local artists with a place to showcase their work.
- Create strategies to divert sport venue goers into the CBD (focus on winter team sport – harder to compete in the summer with the beach).
- Change the perception out there that 'nothing happens' in Lismore
- Create an entertainment area where something is organized for every weekend (or a consistent weekend ie ever 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat/Sun) – promote it and keep it going to grow the market.
- Music, arts and culture should be Lismore's big draw card.
- An outdoor market – Carrington Street, Spinks Park or the Riverbank (Riverside Park) all good areas. Look at different styles of markets to differentiate Lismore from other markets – possibly organic markets with a Southbank Brisbane feel.

“A wharf on the River will attract people to this great location”.

“Change the perception that 'nothing happens' in Lismore”.

### **Focus Group – Community (General 2)**

- Art Gallery should be open all weekend.
- Make Historical society more accessible (install lift)

- Allow, encourage and assist with the development of shop top housing or apartment living in the CBD. This will create life in the City on weekends.
- Establish our identity as a City and follow through with the right marketing and activities and building design and maintenance to reflect the City status. A 'City' has to deliver 7 days a week.
- Work on improving the perception of safety being a problem – help this with more lights in badly lit areas.
- Increase corporate office space
- We need community space for events and meetings (needs to have catering facilities and multi function room flexibility).
- Promote South and North Lismore more and encourage more activity between those areas with the CBD.
- We are often seen as a disparate community – look at ways to address this.
- Investment in 'place' improvements – Landlords to be encouraged to undergo maintenance on buildings (particularly above eye level), Council to improve footpaths/build footpaths and improve maintenance at Riverbank site.
- SCU to be encouraged to connect with the City Centre and support linkages with the community.
- The City Centre could be the hub for artistic and cultural pursuits and be showcased. Not currently well represented.
- Support events with consistent promotion. Build on the success of each year with new innovations and strengthened brand awareness.
- Create an iconic 'space/place' or activity/event that can be linked with the Lismore City Centre. If this is promoted well then all other positioning/branding exercises can hang off it.
- A pub with a beer garden.
- Improve signage and signage interpretation

“Establish our identity as a City and follow through with the right marketing strategy”.

“Create an ‘ICONIC’ space/place or event/activity that is linked with the City Centre”.

### **Focus Group – Community (General 2)cont...**

#### **Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre**

1. Encourage and facilitate shop top and apartment living development in the City Centre. Council to take leadership role in making this happen.
2. Establish an outdoor entertainment precinct for events/markets that caters for all areas of the community. Ensure that there is a comprehensive and consistent program with good marketing and promotion strategy.
3. Create shade in the Riverside park/s – specifically in the area of the amphitheatre as a priority.
4. Investment towards place improvements by all stakeholders in the City Centre. Maintenance of buildings, footpaths and parks and gardens.
5. Create a non-commercial cultural space that could be a 'hub' for local artists and cultural pursuits (ie public arts project etc.)
6. A comprehensive marketing and promotional strategy implemented to assist the City attract and hold its community and visitors in the City Centre for longer.
7. Make more of the River – encourage businesses to establish 'on the River' activity (eg paddle boat hire) and 'on land' activities by the River (eg; café stand).

“Improve security and safety with more streetlights and ‘safe places’.



Participants in Action (Mature Age Go Getters)

## Focus Group – Youth

### Group overview

Proving to be wise beyond their years, our youth representatives were an absolute wealth of ideas and good reasoning. Their input into what would really

make a difference for young people and the community in general was insightful and passionate. The future is in good hands if this group of 14 to 16 year old is anything to go by. We thank the students from Richmond River High School who participated.

A great day out for most teenagers primarily consists of spending time with friends and hanging out together. They like going to places where they can be relaxed and have fun – often attracted to affordable (or free) places. They link towns with 'signature places of fun' eg Ballina with the Waterslides/pool and would like to see Lismore establish a signature place.

They like choice and include dancing, bike riding, skateboarding alongside going to arts centres and sporting events amongst their top choices for things to do on the weekend. The group is also very aware that parents need to feel comfortable about where they spend their time and admit that going to shopping centre's is not the ideal pastime and that they often feel 'unwelcome' or self conscious when they do go into shopping centres.

### Assessment of Lismore City Centre

#### What we love

The overall feeling from the Group was that Lismore has a lot going for it but really does become so very different on weekends compared to during the week. The main association with the City Centre comes from their before and after school interactivity. Rating high for best things included;

- River – but we need to use it more
- Heritage Park – train
- Diversity – different interests of the people
- Sporting facilities – we can host the big games eg Titans game
- Local talent – in music and arts
- PCYC has some great youth activities and opportunities (needs to be promoted better)
- Car Boot Markets
- The independent retailers – lots of variety and are friendly
- Library – particularly Youth activities
- Cinema

“The PCYC is a great place for young people – with great activities”.

### Focus Group – Youth cont...

#### What needs improvement or is missing

An extremely mature approach and a fountain of ideas came from the group with a clear perspective on what were reasonable improvements or additions

that could be made in the City Centre to attract people and give people a reason for coming.

- Improve and increase number of bike tracks (separate to walking paths) also put in bike racks.
- Improve River area with more shade and trees and put in a jetty that goes out on the River. A stage in the River park area would provide a place for bands.
- Opportunities for non-competitive sports eg obstacle courses
- A local art shed for young and aspiring artists to show their works
- Extend the Library opening hours (homework club and youth activities)
- A youth centre run by the youth with an adult coordinator available to assist. Youth could run trivia nights. Encourage opportunities for young people to organize activities and be involved in the communication and marketing aspects.
- Have a community space on the River with a café that could be run by young people to assist them to get work experience.
- Encourage shops to open on Thursday nights and on the weekends (a special mention for Op Shops to stay open later).
- A community garden to show people how to grow their own food and create a better community feel.
- The Pool is not really suitable for fun – ‘blow up Sunday’ is good but would like to see more activities at other times also.
- Public lockers at a central place in the CBD
- Public transport – it is very expensive (\$25 one way to Byron) often have to book up to 24 hours prior to wanting to travel. Increase the number of pick up places and frequency of pick up times. Make more affordable for young people.
- Improve footpaths and safely. Build a bridge for pedestrians over the River.
- Outdoor markets by the River – make sure they are different to the Car Boot market. Organic foods and local arts and crafts would be good.
- More night time activities – you could put events together eg markets and ‘dinner on the street’ event. More alfresco dining would be good.

“A community space on the River with a Café run by young people to give them work experience”.

“Public lockers available in the CBD”.

### **Focus Group – Youth cont...**

- Lismore needs a ‘Signature attraction’ – something that would attract youth but does not have to be commercial as long as it is interesting.
- Introduce outdoor concerts with live local bands - each week there can be a different band or style (variety is good).

- The Outdoor cinema should be encouraged to continue with more regular screenings.
- A feng shui garden or botanical garden.
- A tram from the CBD to Lismore Square – doing a regular loop.
- A graffiti wall as part of a youth arts project – if you allocate the space for graffiti art then they will have more pride.
- Have 'Youth Week' more often.
- Involve young people in the marketing and promotion of their activities. Establish a youth website – run by young people.

### **Top 7 Priorities for a revitalized Lismore City Centre**

1. Improve the River area with a jetty on the Riverbank and a stage for bands. Also establish a café/canteen for young people to work in.
2. Improve marketing of activities and youth opportunities – let the school know what is going on. Involve youth in promotion activity.
3. Outdoor entertainment and activities – youth run events to be encouraged.
4. Transport to be improved as a priority for the whole community and make more affordable for youth.
5. Improve footpaths and safety
6. Create an Icon for Lismore – promote us as the rainbow region and make it sound so great that people feel a sense of pride when they tell people where they live.
7. Improve the look of the streets leading into the Lismore City Centre and CBD with fairy lights in the trees for night time (powered by solar) and lanterns hanging from street poles.

“Create an icon for Lismore – a brand that promotes the Rainbow Region and gives us a sense of pride.””.

Special note:

The group wanted to put their hand up for any other opportunities to be part of future planning for Lismore and would very much like to have the opportunity to meet with the General Manger and Mayor on a regular basis (4 times a year) to discuss issues that are important to Lismore's young people. They expressed that if they feel involved in shaping the future that they will be more inclined to stay here.

## **Focus Groups – Report Conclusion**

### **Identified themes**

There were common themes arising across the eight focus groups which could be catagorised under the following action areas:

1. Improving core facilities – eg; toilets, parking, shade & seating

2. Fostering civic pride – eg; maintenance, shop facades and collaboration
3. Proactive marketing/communications; and
4. Development activities

Events - such as markets in Carrington/ Magellan Sts, an entertainment precinct for artists, musicians and family orientated activities

Investment - improvements and expansion along the River, interactive art projects, making more of the laneways and a residential city living project.

A matrix is attached in Appendix C detailing specific areas under each of the themes listed above and indicated priorities by each of the focus groups.

### Recommendation

The activities/actions can be further prioritized as part of the Workshop 1 process proposed for early April. This process would entail the creation of specific actions from the priorities, an allocation of resource requirements (funding, human capital) and/or further stakeholder engagement.

To further prioritize specific cost items the following *Priority, Cross Benefit and Cost Analysis Tool* could be used to classify activities – by their priority level, the cross benefit impact and financial outlay for implementation. Example:

Activity (create a specific action from priorities list)	Priority – Low (1), Medium (3), High (4)	Cross Benefit to none (0), some (2), many (3)	Cost – Low (3), Medium (2), High (1)	Points total
Allocation - 15 seats	High	Many	Medium	9
Implement \$100K maintenance program	High	Many	High	8
Build Bike bridge over River	Low	Some	High	4

### Thank you

Business and community participants are to be thanked and congratulated for providing their valuable input into taking Lismore City Centre closer to its dynamic future.

## Lismore Alive Focus Groups - Priorities Matrix

Priority	Details	Business Women	Mature Age Go Getters	Comm. Group 1	Tourism	Business	Differing abilities	Youth	Comm. Group 2
<b>Facilities</b>									
Toilets/Baby Change	More available (free) clean rest rooms. Also look at installing public drinking fountains.	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
Improved parking	Extend time limits, create shaded parking with trees, explore feasibility of multi-deck car park.	✓	✓			✓	✓		
Seating	More seating in shade, seating to be provided in non commercial spaces		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Shade/cover	Create shaded areas and all weather protection for space designated for entertainment/markets precinct		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Transport/access	Create a more sophisticated transport system. Increase public transport into Lismore from key areas with increased access points. Improve affordability.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
<b>Civic Pride</b>									
Maintenance	Footpaths - even out, widen and make safer and more attractive. Establish a taskforce to audit civic building and improve eg gutters, drainage, external facades etc. Remove rubbish quicker. Improve maintenance of public parks and gardens/Riverbank vegetation.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean up Graffiti	Clean up and maintain hard hit areas regularly.	✓							
Shop facades	Architectural guidance on creating better look/in keeping with décor overall ie art deco, Improve streetscape cohesiveness. Also look at widening shop doors for better access.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Stakeholders	Encourage landholders to improve building maintenance, encourage business operators to improve shop front display windows. Improve collaboration between Council and other stakeholder such as landlords and business owners. Council to provide support to community groups on issues such as insurance and funding.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Safety	Address safety issues with good strategy ie more people living in the City Centre. More authority for security personel.		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ensure pedestrian safety at roundabouts.			✓			✓		
	Improve Street Lighting - particularly CBD outskirts.			✓	✓		✓	✓	

## Lismore Alive Focus Groups - Priorities Matrix

Priority	Details	Business Women	Mature Age Go Getters	Comm. Group 1	Tourism	Business	Differing abilities	Youth	Comm. Group 2
<b>Development Activities</b>									
Utilising River asset	Encourage restaurants to locate on River. Encourage more activities like outdoor cinema, tai chi, bands etc to happen on the Riverbank. Increase use of on-River activity ie boats, canoes etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Markets	Fresh local produce, locally sourced food and creative products. Be different from other markets in the Northern Rivers. Create a unified and up- market look. Friday night arts and food market - alcohol free zone.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Art Gallery	Use all of building, install lift, open on Sundays. Model on Tween/Grafton Galleries.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Bike track	Create track along river with bike stands. Build a pedestrian/bike bridge between existing bridges	✓						✓	
Entertainment precinct	Outdoor music and entertainment, schedule family friendly activities, showcase local artists work. Local bands and buskers encouraged to perform in the street 'Lismore's got talent'. Have a series of well organised and promoted weekend events.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
International Food Festival	Celebrate the diverse cultures residing in Lismore with an opportunity to share international cuisine.		✓			✓		✓	
Public Art/harness the local talent of artists	Create a project that is interactive for community participation, allocate budget for maintenance			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Temporary street artists space				✓			✓	
Gardens	Consider community gardens as well as introducing public garden spaces for botanicals/feng shui		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Residential Living	Facilitate and foster opportunities for shop top housing, gallery space at street level and artist living quarters above.		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Sense of Place	Create spaces for people to sit and connect with each other. Connect our identity with young local rising stars - possible patrons of the City. Create a prosperous feeling upon entering the City Centre - upkeep of buildings, cleanliness, signage as per Grafton and Armidale.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Showcase environmental sustainability practices of Lismore community			✓				✓	✓
Laneways	Develop laneway improvement projects with different themes. Use this as a way to differentiate.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

