

Strathbogie Shire Region

2016 BUSINESS SURVEY

Survey Results Report

27 January 2017



Connecting + *Growing*
Business in Strathbogie

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Acknowledgements

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The information gained through the survey came from the willingness of local business owners and managers to take the time to fill out the survey and provide details about their enterprises and share their views on business gaps and opportunities for growth. This contribution is greatly appreciated, thank you.

Usage Statement

This business survey report has been prepared specifically for Business Euroa as the client. The information contained in this document has been obtained from a survey of businesses across Strathbogie Shire region. This report has been prepared in good faith and Balmattum Management, its servants, consultants, agents or staff, shall not be responsible in any way whatsoever to any person in respect to the document, including errors or omission therein, however caused.

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Executive Summary

Business Euroa conducted a survey of businesses across Strathbogie Shire region in September and October 2016 to find out about the local economy, the challenges (gaps) that frustrate business owners and managers, and to seek ideas for growing business activity and increasing employment.

Upon receiving this feedback the intention is to share it with the shire-wide business community so that together we can make the economy as good as we can for present and future generations. We can do this by using the survey results to help inform decision making for creating business solutions and offering support to turn good ideas into reality.

We found from the sample size of 140 businesses that Strathbogie Shire region economy produces a wide range of goods and services as shown within 91 industry classifications. Over half of the sample are agricultural or equine businesses followed by professional, manufacturing, retail and other. Most businesses are owner operated and 69% have been operating for over 10 years with 41% intending capital investment over the next two years.

Businesses reported a substantial reach in their customer base with the majority (72%) providing goods and services within Strathbogie Shire region and many trade beyond the shire boundary including 39 businesses that have customers in a vast range of international destinations. Over a third of respondents generate sales from online sources with 5 businesses heavily reliant on internet sales.

Sales turnover per business varied from under \$50,000 to over \$10 million and two thirds of businesses expect sales turnover of up to \$250,000 this financial year. Almost half of respondents expect their sales turnover to increase this financial year compared to last financial year indicating confidence in trading conditions.

Questions about human resources revealed a combined workforce within sample businesses of 773 people comprised of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled positions. The majority indicated no change to employee numbers this year, however, just under 4% will decrease and 12% expect to increase the size of their workforce.

Asked about specific potential gaps in business on the basis of frustration experienced by business owners and managers, responses show internet coverage and speed, along with mobile phone coverage caused the most frustration followed by market forces reducing sales prices. When invited to list additional gaps, respondents mentioned Strathbogie Shire Council property rates, roads and operations, along with internet coverage, caring for the environment and attracting suitable employees.

Finally, the survey sought ideas on how to grow businesses and generate employment. Using a similar approach to finding out about business gaps, respondents were asked to rate suggested opportunities. The top 8 are: Attract new businesses to shire region; Promote industries with potential for growth; Obtain government infrastructure grants for expanding businesses; Expand local manufacturing; Promote Strathbogie Shire region; Attract more people; Expand value-added capability; and Develop diversity of business types. Additional ideas for opportunities were sought and they include: Improve business practices; Improve Strathbogie Shire Council operations; and Enhance liveability within the shire region.

Next steps include sharing these survey findings to enhance understanding of the composition and performance of the local economy. It's hoped this report will assist decision makers overcome gaps that are frustrating businesses and grasp opportunities enabling business growth and more jobs.

Introduction

Business Euroa conducted a survey of businesses throughout Strathbogie Shire region during September and October 2016 with the support of Strathbogie Shire Council and Nagambie Lakes Tourism & Commerce (NLTC).

This research project was undertaken for three reasons:

- To develop a better understanding of our shire region from a business perspective. By knowing more about the local economy, it's hoped that business, community and government decision making will be better informed for strengthening our economy and creating jobs.
- To provide business owners and managers with an occasion to express their feedback on the challenges (gaps) that frustrate them in their business or organisation. This will help decision making for creating business solutions.
- To explore new opportunities by welcoming ideas for growing business activity and increasing employment. Having up to date information on our shire region economy and a variety of options gives us a better chance of converting good ideas into reality.

The shire-wide survey asked business owners and managers about their businesses and organisations and sought their views as to what's missing or difficult and negatively impacts upon business performance. Feedback and ideas were also sought on ways to grow businesses and increase employment.

This report presents the findings of the research project where 140 businesses and organisations from across the shire region responded to questions and provided comments. The scope of information covered in this report includes summaries of findings within three areas: Sample details; Business details and performance; and Gaps and opportunities. Conclusions and next steps are presented at the end of the report to suggest how to apply this information and make the most of our remarkable local economy.

Where small numbers of responses were received for particular questions, those responses have been grouped together to protect the identities of survey participants.

Overview to Strathbogie Shire Economy

Strathbogie Shire region is productive and picturesque and home to 9,826 residents. Located near the centre of Victoria, Strathbogie Shire is connected to 7 local government areas along its borders: Greater Shepparton, Benalla, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Mitchell, Greater Bendigo and Campaspe.

Serviced by two major road networks, the shire area covers 333,000 hectares valued at \$2.8 billion, contains over 1,300 businesses and contributes \$401 million in value-added within \$438 million of Gross Regional Product.

Agricultural and equine activities fill out the landscape as 2,200 farm properties spread across 226,000 hectares representing 68% of total rated land area and valued at just under \$1.5 billion. Agricultural and equine enterprises are the bed-rock of the shire economy contributing over \$88 million in value-added, 821 (27%) of the 3,066 jobs in the shire area within 632 (47%) of 1,332 total businesses.

The local economy's value-added also contains rental, hiring & real estate \$65 million, manufacturing \$45 million, construction \$34 million, public administration & safety \$25 million, health care & social assistance \$23 million and retail of \$17 million.¹



All photographs contained in this report have been provided by Strathbogie Shire Council

¹ (a) REMPLAN Economic Profile for Strathbogie Shire 2016 <http://www.economicprofile.com.au/strathbogie/>
(b) Strathbogie Shire Council Budget Report – 2016/2017 <http://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au>.
(c) Strathbogie Shire Council submission to Drought Policy Review Aug 2008.

Survey Method

Survey questions were developed from a brainstorming session attended by representatives of Business Euroa, Strathbogie Shire Council, NLTC and Balmattum Management. The survey was designed to take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete and was made available online via Survey Monkey application from 23 September to 31 October 2016. Printed copies of the survey were direct-mailed to rate payers in rural areas of the shire to overcome any issues with internet access and provide opportunity for all business owners and managers to participate in the survey.

Business owners and managers across Strathbogie Shire region were encouraged to be involved through 9 communication channels:

- Letter-drop to households in Euroa, Strathbogie, Violet Town, Longwood, Avenel and Nagambie townships with an invitation to participate and online survey access details.
- Direct-mail of printed surveys to rural areas of shire with covering letter explaining project.
- Printed surveys were made available at Visitor Information Centres in Euroa and Nagambie as well the reception area at Strathbogie Shire Council in Euroa.
- Articles in print newspapers: The Euroa Gazette and Nagambie Voice.
- Articles within Strathbogie Shire Council's newsletter.
- Social media advertising on Facebook including a light hearted promotional video.
- Links on Business Euroa's and Council's web sites.
- Interview on ABC local radio.
- Emails to business networks.

At the outset of each survey, participants were asked for their consent to their survey responses being managed in accordance with a specified process and informed that in order to take the survey a "Yes" answer is required. Online "No" answers generated an exit from the survey and completed printed surveys with "No" answers were not included in survey results.

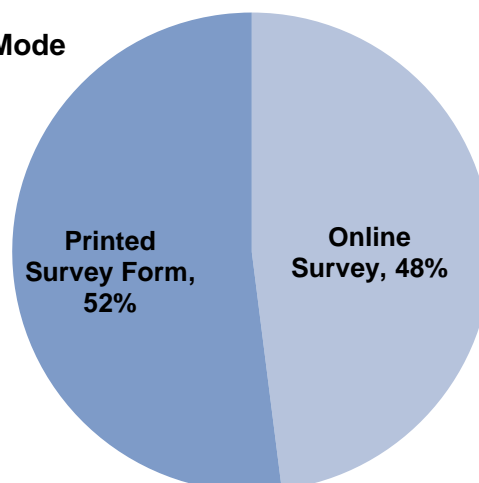
Survey responses were collected by Strathbogie Shire Council in accordance with its privacy policy and a summary report of survey responses using aggregated information (this report) will be made available online by Business Euroa. The survey report will also be emailed to participants at the email address listed in their survey contact information.

Survey Sample

140 useable survey responses from across Strathbogie Shire region were received representing approximately 10% of all businesses. 67 respondents (48%) completed the survey online and 73 (52%) filled in a printed survey form. 3 respondents elected to not provide their names.

How Survey Completed		
Survey Mode	No.	%
Printed Survey Form	73	52.14%
Online Survey	67	47.86%
Total	140	100.00%

Survey Mode



Findings Summary

- The survey attracted 140 useable responses with most from Euroa & District, 75, followed by Nagambie and Violet Town areas of 18 each, Longwood and Strathbogie 9 each, Avenel 8 and 3 without locations.
- 132 respondents reported being for-profit businesses and 8 as not-for-profit organisations.
- Business operating structures were typically owner operated with 125 businesses (89%), followed by 8 manager operated, 5 community/government/other organisations and 2 branch offices.
- 27 businesses described their enterprises as home based.
- 30 businesses employ family members and 26 employ non-family members.
- 69% have been operating for over 10 years with these long termers comprised of agricultural or equine businesses (over half) followed by professional, manufacturing and retail.
- Enquiries about trading days/times found 108 business trade Monday to Friday, 75 are open Monday to Saturday and 69 Monday to Sunday. A wide range of opening and closing times are evident in the sample and farmers often stated they operate their businesses 7 days per week 24 hours a day.
- Agriculture and equine dominated the sample industries with 78 businesses (55%) followed by Professional 14, Manufacturing 9, Retailing 7, Arts & recreation 5, Other services 5 and Food & beverages 4.
- A wide range of goods and services are produced in the shire from this cohort of businesses as shown from the 91 industry classifications. On this basis, Agriculture and equine lead the list with beef cattle, sheep wool and sheep meat, other crop growing, other farm services and equine-other followed by hospitality with cafes and restaurants, tourism services and accommodation.
- Businesses reported a substantial geographic reach of their customer base as most of the sample provide goods and services within Strathbogie Shire region and many trade beyond the shire boundary including 39 businesses with customers in a considerable assortment of international destinations.
- Sales turnover per business ranged from under \$50,000 to over \$10 million and two thirds of businesses expect sales turnover of up to \$250,000 this financial year.
- 47% of respondents expect their sales turnover to increase this financial year compared to last financial year, 39% anticipate no change and 14% believe sales will decline.
- Over a third of respondents generate sales from online sources with 5 businesses heavily reliant on internet sales.
- The sample reported a combined workforce size of 773 people and the largest employing industries are Agriculture & equine with 256 employees (33%) and Manufacturing 196 employees (25%).
- 12% of the sample expect an increase in workforce this year, 4% a decrease and 87% no change.
- 79 businesses (56%) reported that over 60% of their workforce is skilled.
- Over the next 2 years 57 businesses (41%) intend making capital investments.

Findings Summary (cont.)

- Participants were asked about specific frustrating business gaps. The top 4 are:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Internet coverage. | 3. Mobile phone coverage. |
| 2. Internet speed. | 4. Market forces reduce sales prices. |

- When invited to list additional gaps, participants responded with the following:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Council property rates. | 4. Internet coverage. |
| 2. Council road maintenance. | 5. Caring for the environment. |
| 3. Council operations. | 6. Attracting employees. |

- Respondents rated a list of 16 opportunities for growing businesses and generating employment. The top 8 opportunities are:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Attract new businesses to shire region. | 5. Promote Strathbogie Shire region. |
| 2. Promote industries with potential for growth. | 6. Attract more people. |
| 3. Obtain government infrastructure grants. | 7. Expand value-added capability. |
| 4. Expand local manufacturing. | 8. Develop diversity of business types. |

- Additional ideas for opportunities were sought and responses included:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Promote Strathbogie Shire region. | 3. Improve Shire Council operations. |
| 2. Improve business practices. | 4. Enhance liveability within shire. |



Findings Part A: Business Details & Performance

Locations

The locations of respondents have been grouped around towns with the majority of survey responses from Euroa & District, 75, followed by Nagambie and Violet Town areas of 18 respondents each, Longwood and Strathbogie of 9, Avenel of 8 and 3 respondents not providing location addresses.

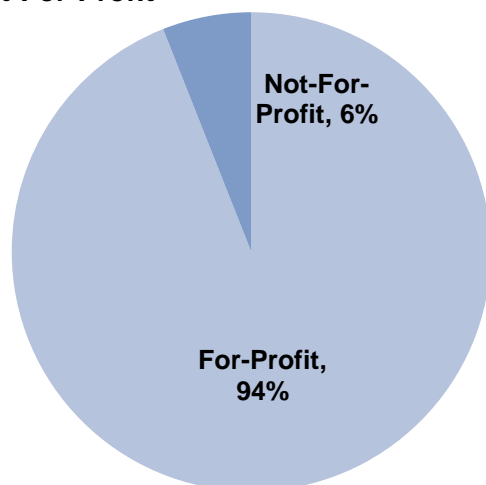
Locations of Survey Respondents		
Locations	No.	%
Euroa & District	75	53.57%
Nagambie & District	18	12.86%
Violet Town & District	18	12.86%
Longwood & District	9	6.43%
Strathbogie & District	9	6.43%
Avenel & District	8	5.71%
Location not provided	3	2.14%
Total	140	100.00%

Profit Perspectives

132 respondents reported they are for-profit businesses and 8 are not-for-profit organisations.

For-Profit & Not-For-Profit		
Profit Perspectives	No.	%
For-Profit	132	94.29%
Not-For-Profit	8	5.71%
Total	140	100.00%

For-Profit & Not-For-Profit



Business Operating Structures

Most businesses, 125 out of 140, reported they are owner operated and 8 employ managers to operate their businesses. 5 are community/government/other organisations and 2 are branch offices. Family members are employed in 30 businesses and 26 businesses have non-family employees. 27 businesses operate from home.

Business Operating Structures		
Types	No.	%
Owner/s operate business	125	89.29%
Manager/s operate business on behalf of owner/s	8	5.71%
Community / Government / Other organisation	5	3.57%
Branch office	2	1.43%
Total	140	100.00%

Length of Time in Business

Longevity is a theme among this survey's respondents as 97 businesses representing 69% of the sample have existed for 10 years and over, of which 61 businesses (44%) have been operating for over 20 years.

The industries that display greatest business longevity (10 years and over) are Agriculture & equine at almost 64%, Professional services 8%, Manufacturing 5%, and Arts & recreation, Food & beverages and Other services at 3%.

Length of Time in Business		
Years	No.	%
Less than 1 year	5	3.60%
1 to 2 years	5	3.60%
2 to 5 years	14	10.07%
5 to 10 years	18	12.95%
10 to 15 years	22	15.83%
15 to 20 years	14	10.07%
Over 20 years	61	43.88%
Total	139	100.00%

Trading Days & Opening Hours

Business owners and managers were asked about their trading days and opening hours. Answers show Monday to Friday trading for most businesses, 108 out of 140, with 80 businesses trading on Saturday and 69 on Sunday. A further 24 did not list trading days, and of these, 20 are Agriculture & equine classified businesses, of which 5 recorded Not Applicable (N/A) and 1 “Farming is all day”.

Trading Days	
Days	No.
Monday	112
Tuesday	111
Wednesday	113
Thursday	113
Friday	113
Saturday	80
Sunday	69

Of the 69 businesses that operate 7 days per week the greatest number are Agriculture & equine at 47 followed by Food & beverages 4, Retailing 4 and Professional 3. A similar situation existed with Monday to Saturday trading with 75 businesses. The change in business numbers from 7 days trading back to six days is plus 6 comprised of Agriculture & equine 3, Professional 2 and Manufacturing 1.

Trading Monday to Saturday	
Industries	No.
Accommodation	1
Agriculture & Equine	50
Arts & Recreation	1
Construction	2
Education & Training	2
Food & Beverages	4
Manufacturing	3
Other Services	2
Professional	5
Retailing	4
Wholesaling	1
Total	75

Trading Monday to Sunday	
Industries	No.
Accommodation	1
Agriculture & Equine	47
Arts & Recreation	1
Construction	2
Education & Training	2
Food & Beverages	4
Manufacturing	2
Other Services	2
Professional	3
Retailing	4
Wholesaling	1
Total	69

Businesses presented a wide range of opening hours, for example, open for business from 5.00 am, 6.00 am, 7.00 am, 8.00 am, 9.00 am or 10.00 am. Closing from 4.00 pm, 5.00 pm, 5.30 pm, 6.00 pm, 7.00 pm, 8.00 pm or later. A frequent response from businesses in the Agriculture & equine industry was “Seven days a week” and “24 hours a day”.

Industries

A list of 173 industry classifications within 20 industry divisions was assembled by adapting the Australian Bureau of Statistics ANZIC 2006 Division, Subdivision and Group codes. At Division level “Accommodation” was added and “Agriculture & equine” was formed, and the Subdivision and Group codes were selected for their relevance to Strathbogie Shire region. The intention was to create an industry list to give survey participants sufficient scope to identify their business industry and provide enough range of industry classifications to achieve useful information from the survey findings, for example, to gain insights into goods and services produced in the region.

Respondents were asked to identify their business industry from the provided list of 173 industry classifications within 20 industry divisions and invited to select more than one industry if applicable to them. The substantial level of agriculture and equine activity in the local economy and importance of this industry was demonstrated by 78 businesses listing Agriculture & equine as their industry. This figure, however, is actually higher as businesses in other industries also indicated agriculture & equine as respondents availed of the option to select multiple industry classifications.

The list of industries encompassed Professional 14, Manufacturing 9, Retailing 7, Arts & recreation 5, Other services 5 and Food & beverages 4.

All other businesses totalled 18 where number counts were up to 3: Accommodation, Administration, Construction, Education & training, Financial services, Health care & social assistance, Information media, Public administration & safety, Transport, Utilities and Wholesaling.

Industries		
Divisions	No.	%
Agriculture & Equine	78	55.71%
Arts & Recreation Services	5	3.57%
Food & Beverages	4	2.86%
Manufacturing	9	6.43%
Other Services	5	3.57%
Professional	14	10.00%
Retailing	7	5.00%
Accommodation , Administration, Construction, Education & Training, Financial Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Information Media, Public Administration & Safety, Transport, Utilities, & Wholesaling	18	12.86%
Total	140	100.00%

Goods & Services

An indication of the scope of goods and services being produced in Strathbogie Shire area is presented in this report using industry classifications. Drilling down to survey participants' industry responses reveals the broad range of value-added activities in the shire region. The most frequently cited industry classifications are listed below including the number of times selected by respondents.

Agriculture and equine activities lead the list, particularly with beef cattle, sheep wool and sheep meat, other crop growing, other farm services and equine-other followed by hospitality with cafes and restaurants, tourism services and accommodation. Survey participants mentioned a total of 91 industry classifications from the provided list of 173 (see table further below) demonstrating a wide variety of goods and services on offer in this region.

Most Frequently Cited Industry Classifications

Industry Classifications	No.	Industry Classifications	No.
Agriculture: Beef Cattle Farming	36	Professional: Management & Related Consulting	4
Agriculture: Sheep Wool Farming	28	Administrative & Support Services: Administration	3
Agriculture: Sheep Meat Farming	27	Agriculture: Livestock Buying/Selling	3
Agriculture: Other Crop Growing	11	Arts & Recreation: Creative & Performing Arts	3
Agriculture: Other Farm Services	8	Construction: Construction Services	3
Equine: Other	8	Equine: Horse Training	3
Food & Beverage: Cafes, Restaurants	7	Financial Services: Finance	3
Other Services: Tourism Services	7	Financial Services: Insurance	3
Accommodation	6	Manufacturing Food: Beverage	3
Agriculture: Grain Farming	4	Manufacturing Non-Food: Clothing & Footwear	3
Agriculture: Viticulture Production	4	Other Services: Other Repair & Maintenance	3
Arts & Rec: Sports & Physical Recreation	4	Professional: Architectural, Engineering & Tech	3
Equine: Horse Breeding	4	Professional: Other Prof, Scientific & Technical	3
Manufacturing Non-Food: Textiles	4		



Industry Classifications Selected By Respondents

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation

ADMINISTRATIVE & SUPPORT SERVICES

Administrative & Support Services: Administration

Administrative & Support Services: Employment Services

AGRICULTURE & EQUINE

Agriculture: Alpaca Farming

Agriculture: Beef Cattle Farming

Agriculture: Beekeeping

Agriculture: Deer Farming

Agriculture: Farm Repairs & Maintenance

Agriculture: Forestry & Logging

Agriculture: Fruit Growing

Agriculture: Grain Farming

Agriculture: Livestock Buying/Selling

Agriculture: Nursery Production

Agriculture: Other Crop Growing

Agriculture: Other Farm Services

Agriculture: Poultry Egg Farming

Agriculture: Shearing Services

Agriculture: Sheep Meat Farming

Agriculture: Sheep Wool Farming

Agriculture: Stock Feed Production

Agriculture: Viticulture Production

Equine: Horse Breeding

Equine: Horse Events

Equine: Horse Training

Equine: Other

ARTS & RECREATION SERVICES

Arts & Recreation Services: Creative & Performing Arts Activities

Arts & Recreation Services: Sports & Physical Recreation

CONSTRUCTION

Construction: Building Construction: Non-Residential Building

Construction: Building Construction: Residential Building

Construction: Construction Services

Construction: Heavy & Civil Engineering Construction

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Education & Training: Adult, Community & Other Education

FINANCIAL & INSURANCE SERVICES

Financial Services: Finance

Financial Services: Insurance

Financial Services: Superannuation Funds

FOOD & BEVERAGE SERVICES

Food & Beverage Services: Cafes, Restaurants & Takeaway

Food & Beverage Services: Pubs, Taverns & Bars

HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Health Care & Social Assistance: Allied Health Services

Health Care & Social Assistance: Medical Services

Health Care & Social Assistance: Pathology & Diagnostic Imaging Services

INFORMATION MEDIA & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Information Media: Broadcasting (except Internet)

Information Media: Internet Publishing & Broadcasting

Information Media: Internet Service Providers, Web Search Portals & Data Processing

Information Media: Motion Picture & Sound Recording Activities

Information Media: Other Information Services

Information Media: Publishing (except Internet & Music Publishing)

Information Media: Telecommunications Services

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing Food: Beverage

Manufacturing Food: Grain Mill & Cereal Product

Manufacturing Food: Meat & Meat Product

Manufacturing Non-Food: Clothing & Footwear

Manufacturing Non-Food: Fabricated Metal Product

Manufacturing Non-Food: Furniture & Other

Manufacturing Non-Food: Knitted Product

Manufacturing Non-Food: Machinery & Equipment

Manufacturing Non-Food: Primary Metal & Metal Product

Manufacturing Non-Food: Printing (including the Reproduction of Recorded Media)

Manufacturing Non-Food: Textiles

Manufacturing Non-Food: Wood Product

MINING

Mining: Mining Support Services

OTHER SERVICES

Other Services: Automotive Repair & Maintenance

Other Services: Civic, Professional & Other Interest Group

Other Services: Funeral, Crematorium & Cemetery Services

Other Services: Machinery & Equipment Repair & Maintenance

Other Services: Other Repair & Maintenance

Other Services: Tourism Services

PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL SERVICES

Professional: Accounting Services

Professional: Advertising Services

Professional: Architectural, Engineering & Technical Services

Professional: Computer System Design & Related Services

Professional: Environmental Services

Professional: Legal Services

Professional: Management & Related Consulting Services

Professional: Other Professional, Scientific & Technical

Professional: Photographic Services

Professional: Scientific Research Services

Professional: Veterinary Services

Industry Classifications Selected By Respondents

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & SAFETY

Public Administration & Safety

RENTAL, HIRING & REAL ESTATE SERVICES

Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services: Rental & Hiring Services
(except Real Estate)

RETAILING

Retailing: Clothing, Footwear & Personal Accessory

Retailing: Farm Supplies

Retailing: Food

Retailing: Furniture, Floor Coverings, Houseware & Textile
Goods

Retailing: Non-Store Based

Retailing: Other Store-Based

Retailing: Recreational Goods

TRANSPORT

Transport: Road Freight

UTILITIES

Utilities: Electrical Installations & Repairs.

WHOLESALE

Wholesaling: Grocery, Liquor & Tobacco Product

Wholesaling: Machinery & Equipment

Wholesaling: Other Goods



Customers' Locations

Respondents showed the depth and breadth of the local economy's customer base as 101 businesses engage with customers in Strathbogie Shire followed by 89 transacting with customers in neighbouring shires. Other parts of Victoria featured next as indicated by 80 businesses then 73 for Melbourne and 68 in other states. 39 businesses have customers in international regions including Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Asia, Europe, Eurasia, Middle East, North America and Pacific Ocean.

All Customers		
Locations	No.	%
Within Strathbogie Shire	101	22.44%
Neighbouring shire/s	89	19.78%
Melbourne	73	16.22%
Other VIC	80	17.78%
Other states	68	15.11%
International	39	8.67%
Total	450	100.00%

International Customers			
Region	Country	Region	Country
North America	Canada	Northern Europe	Denmark
North America	USA	Northern Europe	England
East Asia	China	Northern Europe	Iceland
East Asia	Hong Kong	Northern Europe	Ireland
East Asia	Japan	Northern Europe	Netherlands
East Asia	South Korea	Northern Europe	Norway
East Asia	Taiwan	Northern Europe	Scotland
South East Asia	Indonesia	Northern Europe	Sweden
South East Asia	Malaysia	Western Europe	Austria
South East Asia	Philippines	Western Europe	France
South East Asia	Singapore	Western Europe	Germany
South East Asia	Thailand	Western Europe	Switzerland
South East Asia	Vietnam	Africa	Not specified
South Asia	India	Africa	South Africa
Eurasia	Turkey	Middle East	Not specified
South Pacific Ocean	Fiji	Arabian Peninsula	United Arab Emirates
South Western Pacific Ocean	New Zealand		

Sales Turnover

Sales turnover was reported over 2 years: Last financial year being 2015/16; and expected sales turnover for this financial year 2016/17. Responses indicate only modest differences in the number of businesses within each sales turnover category from last year to this year. For both years, most businesses fell within “\$50,000 to \$250,000” (25%) followed by “Up to \$50,000” (41%). For the next 3 sales turnover categories business numbers ranged from 10 to 15, and there were 5 businesses positioned in the over \$10 million category.

Sales Turnover Per Business				
Sales Turnover	Last Financial Year		This Financial Year (Expected)	
	No.	%	No.	\$
Up to \$50,000	31	25.20%	30	25.00%
\$50,000 to \$250,000	50	40.65%	49	40.83%
\$250,000 to \$500,000	10	8.13%	10	8.33%
\$500,000 to \$1 million	12	9.76%	11	9.17%
\$1 million to \$10 million	15	12.20%	15	12.50%
Over \$10 million	5	4.07%	5	4.17%
Total	123	100.00%	120	100.00%

Expected Changes to Sales Turnover This Financial Year

When asked to indicate the direction of any change to sales turnover this financial year 2016/17 compared with last financial year, 60 businesses (47%) forecast an increase, while 49 (39%) said “No change”. A further 18 businesses (14%) expect a decrease in turnover this year.

Change in Sales Turnover This Financial Year (Expected) Compared to Last Financial Year		
Change	No.	%
Decrease over 10%	11	8.66%
Decrease 5 to 10%	4	3.15%
Decrease 1 to 5%	3	2.36%
No change	49	38.58%
Increase 1 to 5%	26	20.47%
Increase 5 to 10%	15	11.81%
Increase over 10%	19	14.96%
Total	127	100.00%

Online Sales

The majority of respondents, 84 out of 136 (62%), stated that none of their sales are derived from online internet sources. The remaining 52 (38%), however, indicated a range of online usage to gain sales. For example, 5 businesses (4%) achieve 80 to 100% of their sales online and 27 (20%) produce 1 to 20% of sales from online sources.

Online Sales		
% of Sales	No.	%
1% to 20%	27	19.85%
20% to 40%	8	5.88%
40% to 60%	8	5.88%
60% to 80%	4	2.94%
80% to 100%	5	3.68%
None	84	61.76%
Total	136	100.00%

Workforce

Survey participants were asked about the composition of their workforces on the basis of time (full time or part time) and gender. Businesses were invited to include business owners within their workforces, however, that appeared to be inconsistently applied, therefore, numbers provided may or may not include business owners. The survey instructions may not have been sufficiently clear on this point, and can be improved upon next time.

The combined workforce size of survey respondents is 773 people comprised of 345 full time employees (46%) and 405 part time (54%). Note that a time perspective was not provided for 23 employees. As to gender within the workforce, there are 424 males (55%) and 349 females (45%).

The largest employing industries are Agriculture & equine with 256 employees (33%) and Manufacturing 196 employees (25%). All other businesses totalled 142 employees where number counts of businesses per industry were up to 3: Accommodation; Administration; Construction; Education & training; Financial services; Health care & social assistance; Information media; Public administration & safety; Transport; Utilities; and Wholesaling.

Workforce - Number of People Employed		
Industry Divisions	No.	%
Agriculture & Equine	256	33.12%
Arts & Recreation Services	4	0.52%
Food & Beverages	44	5.69%
Manufacturing	197	25.49%
Other Services	59	7.63%
Professional	39	5.05%
Retailing	32	4.14%
Accommodation, Administration, Construction, Education & Training, Financial Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Information Media, Public Administration & Safety, Transport, Utilities, & Wholesaling	142	18.37%
Total	773	100.00%

Change to Size of Workforce

The survey asked whether a change to the size of respondents' workforce is expected this financial year. 87 participants (84%) responded "No change", 13 (12%) indicated an increase and 4 (4%) reported a decrease.

Change to Size of Workforce This Financial Year (Expected)		
Change	No.	%
Increase	13	12.50%
No change	87	83.65%
Decrease	4	3.85%
Total	104	100.00%

Skill Levels of Workforce

The skill level of respondents' workforce was explored by asking about the proportion (%) of their workforce as skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled. This question revealed the major portion to be skilled.

- 99 businesses employ skilled personnel.
 - 79 reported over 60% of their workforce as skilled.
 - 20 said up to 60% of their workforce are skilled.
- 42 businesses have semi-skilled employees.
 - 33 with up to 60% of their workforce.
 - 9 responded that over 60% of their employees are semi-skilled.
- 25 businesses employ unskilled personnel.
 - 21 have up to 60% of their workforce made up of unskilled employees.
 - 4 said that over 60% of their workforce is unskilled.

Skill Levels of Workforce			
Proportion of Workforce	Skilled	Semi-Skilled	Unskilled
	No.	No.	No.
None	1	4	10
1 to 20%	5	15	10
20% to 40%	8	12	7
40% to 60%	7	6	4
60% to 80%	11	3	2
80% to 100%	68	6	2
Total	100	46	35

Future Capital Investment

57 respondents (41% of respondents) are planning capital investment in the next 2 years with the majority (34 businesses) intending to spend up to \$250,000, 13 businesses up to \$500,000, 5 planning investments of between \$500,000 and \$1 million and 5 to invest over \$1 million.

Capital Investment in the Next 2 Years		
Amount	No.	%
Up to \$250,000	34	59.65%
\$250,000 to \$500,000	13	22.81%
\$500,000 to \$1 million	5	8.77%
Over \$1 million	5	8.77%
Total	57	100.00%



Findings Part B: Business Gaps & Opportunities

Key areas for gaining insights into the local economy is through identification of (a) business gaps that frustrate business owners and managers, and (b) opportunities to grow businesses and employment. These two areas were addressed within separate questions and respondents were invited to add comments.

Business Gaps

Participants were provided with the following definition of business gaps:

“Business gaps are what’s missing or difficult and negatively impacts upon business performance.”

They were then asked: “What business gaps frustrate you?”

To assist respondents a list of 32 potential business gaps was provided and instructions given on how to respond: “Please indicate your views on these gaps by rating all of them from 1 to 7 where 1 is most frustrating and 7 is least frustrating. Add further business gaps at “Other” and also rate them.”

Responses to the list of 32 business gaps have been summed then averaged according to the number of responses per gap and the results shown below. The lower the average response number means more frustrating than gaps with higher average responses. The results have been grouped into 2.00 to 2.99, 3.00 to 3.99, 4.00 to 4.49, 4.50 to 4.99 and 5.00 to 5.99.

The greatest frustration is exhibited towards internet coverage and speed, as well as mobile phone coverage, followed by market forces reducing sales prices. In the next highest band of 4.00 to 4.49 respondents put forward gaps with passenger rail transport, capital investment returns, increase in cost of goods sold, compliance requirements, electricity supply, technology in business, renewable energy for business and training/education facilities.

Business Gaps	Rating: 1 = Most Frustrating to 7 = Least Frustrating	Rating
• Internet coverage has gaps.		2.64
• Internet speed too slow.		2.65
• Mobile phone coverage has gaps.		2.87
• Market forces reduce sales prices.		3.87
• Rail passenger transport access is limited.		4.08
• Returns from local capital investments are too low.		4.17
• Increase in cost of goods/services sold.		4.20
• Compliance requirements are difficult to meet, eg safety, employee, taxation, environmental.		4.21
• Electricity supply is unreliable.		4.29
• Lack of access to technology to improve business operations.		4.31
• Renewable energy for businesses is not sufficiently available.		4.42
• Shortfall of training/education facilities within shire region.		4.49

The next 20 business gaps were rated between 4.50 and 5.50 on average and overall less frustrating to respondents than the first 12 gaps.

Business Gaps	Rating: 1 = Most Frustrating to 7 = Least Frustrating	Rating
• Materials/stock within shire region is difficult to source.		4.54
• Insufficient environmental systems to recover, recycle or reuse waste.		4.56
• Rail freight transport access is limited.		4.67
• Limited accommodation/hospitality facilities within shire region.		4.69
• Shortfall of markets to sell products/services locally.		4.72
• Road freight transport access is limited.		4.79
• Road passenger transport access is limited.		4.85
• Inadequate caring for environment (land, water, air, plants or animals).		4.86
• Don't know who to talk to in government (federal, state, local) about land/building planning approval process.		4.94
• Marketing via social media is difficult.		4.94
• Local people are not suitable to recruit as employees.		4.99
• Water supply is insufficient.		5.02
• Succession planning is limited.		5.07
• Business finance is difficult to obtain.		5.07
• Employees lack skills to fulfil business operational requirements.		5.08
• Lack of key trading partners within shire region.		5.12
• Business planning is not effective.		5.17
• Cannot compete on price with businesses located outside shire region.		5.19
• Air passenger transport access is limited.		5.32
• Air freight transport access is limited.		5.34

Additional Business Gaps

Respondents were invited to add business gaps and some reiterated those listed above and others expanded the list with additional gaps. These gaps are listed below and have been coded and grouped then ordered by most frequently mentioned at the top to least frequently mentioned at the bottom. Note that respondents often provided comments about multiple gaps. The top 3 most often mentioned gaps related to Strathbogie Shire Council, internet access and caring for environment.

Strathbogie Shire Council

- Rates in the shire are too expensive. Rates, being the second highest in the state are a big deterrent to people investing in either business or residential. Council rates are the biggest threat to the future of the shire. Not sustainable. Shire will not grow while they charge these wealth taxes and give nothing back.
- Rates are too high, need to reduce these to encourage business. Reduce farm rates, we manage another farm in another shire and farm rates are cheaper than Strathbogie. Can the shire manage costs better to reduce expenditure? Council should find ways to give farmers some value / return on the rates we pay.
- Road maintenance is poor on roads. Roads are rough. Inability of Council to maintain a suitable standard of infrastructure, for example roads. Lack of maintenance on public roads.
- Council should support local business more. Local Council is negative & stagnate towards expanding business. Council is preventing development of this shire by business being over regulated and placing obstacles in front of new business development. Council has been influenced by negative people. Council source some professional services from outside shire, however, competent people are available within the shire area.
- Council wastes money and is not managed in a business-like fashion. State Government cost shifting to local government is a problem.
- Lack of support for local building content. Illogical and oversimplified planning. Planning approvals too slow.
- Limited industrial buildings and very poor drainage in existing industrial estate. Rubbish bin collection service is appalling, giving rise to rubbish being dumped on backroads. Very few council services are relevant to our business.

Internet

- Major problem is gaps in internet coverage. Internet coverage is bad. Lack of internet has limited our business. The main problem facing my business is poor internet access. Need to drastically improve internet connections for those out of town.

Environment

- Inadequate caring for environment by neighbours, Council, Vic Roads & crown land. Nature reserve, wildlife reserve, flora reserve all need conservation management as all have erosion issues. Government bodies want recognition as ownership but not put hand up to help with issues. Especially Sevens Creek Reserve erosion (very poor). No Government bodies appear to show any interest in preserving dingoes.
- Climate change promotion is required for the fledgling rural industry of primary producers, farming contractors, cartage contractors, motor mechanics etc. Why did council stop giving rebates on rates for control of weeds?

Employees

- Can't afford the cost of long term employees. Lack of a skilled & industrious workforce pool to hire employees from. Hard to attract professional staff to relocate to the region. It's difficult to get staff.

Business Factors

- Need some local traders, food etc., to lift game. Lack of cooperation between businesses. Type and cost of advertising. Need venture capital prospects.
- We currently obtain a number of our services from neighbouring shires by sheer necessity. We are a family farm, mostly we are involved in activities involving our farm & mostly use facilities out of shire.
- This Business Euroa does not cover such properties / businesses as the one I run. Therefore I obviously don't count / am unimportant.

Mobile Phones

- The major problem facing my business is poor phone access. Lack of mobile phone has limited our business. Need to improve phone reception, it is not good enough.

Renewable energy

- I am most frustrated at the poor investment in renewables in our region. My business would much prefer to be running vehicles on electricity (produced from renewables) than fossil fuels. This is a major environmental and economical problem, of concern both locally and internationally. If this problem was overcome, the advantages would be innumerable.
- Because of low fossil fuel diesel prices, renewable diesel fuel from vegetable oil has mainly been halted.

Electricity

- Electricity provider will not allow a larger solar system than 4.5 MW and you need at least 7 to be viable.
- Unreliable power supply including outages for several hours in both Sep & Oct 2016.

Promotion of Region

- Lack of understanding of the need for promotion of the region.
- Lack of town advertising on highways.

Grants

- Limited funding opportunities available due to removal of financial assistance grants.
- Need federal and state government grants.

Other comments (mentioned once)

- Town water supply not sufficient to handle more industry or large population growth.
- Lack of public hospital beds in shire an ongoing problem.
- All we need here are good roads and post office freight from port - and easy access to Tullamarine Airport. Local transport operator provides us with excellent services.
- Why is fuel 4 to 8 cents per litre more expensive than Seymour, Shepparton and Benalla?
- Postage is too expensive.
- V/Line train service used to be good, now it is appalling. Services constantly changed and train replaced with coach at last minute. Passengers severely inconvenienced.
- Buyer collusion within sheep sales which are held in neighbouring shire's where the markets are.
- Lack of ability to move machinery within shire.
- Goulburn Murray Water rates are too high. It does not provide any infrastructure, eg. dams, pumps, pipes. Its rates are hard to justify.



Opportunities

Respondents were provided with the following definition of opportunity: "Opportunities are ways to grow businesses and employment."

Then they were asked: "What needs to be done within Strathbogie Shire region to grow businesses and increase employment?"

To assist respondents a list of 16 suggested opportunities was provided and instructions given on how to respond: "Please rate each opportunity from 1 to 7 where 1 is most important and 7 is least important. Add further opportunities at "Other" and also rate them."

Responses to the list of 16 opportunities have been summed then averaged according to the number of responses per opportunity and the results shown below. The lower the average response number means more importance. The results have been grouped into 2.00 to 2.49, 2.50 to 2.99 and 3.00 to 3.99.

The top 4 rated opportunities are about attracting new businesses, promoting industries with growth potential, government grants for infrastructure and expanding local manufacturing.

The next 4 most important are promoting Strathbogie Shire region, attracting new people to the shire, increasing value adding and developing diversity of business types.

In the over 2.50 rating are reduce energy costs by producing renewable energy, Strathbogie Shire Council to promote events, increase trading between businesses within the shire region, and develop recreational activities for residents and visitors. The over 3.00 rated opportunities reflect some respondents marking them as less important. They comprise provide employee training, develop diversity of population, provide management training and finally, extend trading hours.

Opportunities	Rating: 1 = Most Important to 7 = Least Important	Rating
• Attract new businesses to shire region.		2.10
• Promote industries with potential for growth.		2.15
• Obtain government infrastructure grants for expanding businesses.		2.25
• Expand local manufacturing.		2.27
• Promote Strathbogie Shire region as a visitor destination.		2.31
• Attract new people to shire region and increase resident population.		2.31
• Increase scope and scale of value adding of commodities/goods/services produced within shire region.		2.31
• Develop diversity of business types.		2.46
• Reduce energy costs of local businesses by producing renewable energy within the shire region.		2.64
• Strathbogie Shire Council to provide additional events and promotions of shire region as it's useful for businesses.		2.68
• Increase trading between businesses within the shire region.		2.68
• Develop additional recreational activities for residents and visitors.		2.89
• Provide employee training.		3.31
• Develop diversity of population.		3.47
• Provide management training for business owners/managers.		3.64
• Extend trading hours.		3.98

Additional Opportunities

Suggestions for opportunities were welcomed from respondents and some reiterated those that were on the provided list and others put forward additional opportunities. The comments about these opportunities appear below with the most frequently cited opportunities at the top and then listed in descending frequency order. Note that respondents often provided comments about multiple opportunities.

The top 4 most often mentioned opportunities relate to promoting the region, business suggestions, Strathbogie Shire Council services, and liveability.

Promote Strathbogie Shire Region

- Strathbogie Shire is only 2 hours from Melbourne and we need businesses open longer to attract more tourists/visitors. Carry out significant promotion of Strathbogie Shire in Australia and overseas. Work with politicians. Learn from promotional material from towns outside our shire as to why people should move to their town. Market what you already have and get on with it.
- Nagambie is doing a great job in our shire, in particular the wineries. Still there is a lot that can be done to promote that part of our shire. Nagambie appears to be the best location for tourism development due to natural attractive resources: lake, scenery, and close proximity to Melbourne. Apply for funding to complete boardwalk around Lake Nagambie as a viewing platform. Develop a playground for all abilities in Nagambie. Continue to develop medical facilities and support emergency services. We need a big sign on High Street advertising the pool. Lots of people just think we have a lake. There is great potential in our shire. Nagambie Lakes Tourism & Commerce is trying hard and needs encouragement.
- Develop activities within Euroa to attract visitors and increase the dollars coming into our local community and renew the local pride in the area. Promote Euroa as a great place to retire. Euroa, more than Nagambie, has great potential as a retirement town, eg. good sporting facilities, rail access, hospital, hostel and nursing home.
- Protection of environmental resources is key to maintaining the attractiveness. Development of an Olympic standard dressage facility would be useful and could be used for other events (bull riding, rodeo) carnivals, agriculture shows, concerts.
- Biggest builder for shire would be a fast train link to Melbourne. Forget manufacturing, it won't happen. Capitalise on beauty of area: accommodation, tourism, clean environment, not industrial agriculture. Let that expand to where it can't be seen. Thriving Victorian country towns have well developed tourism strategies and successfully attract money into their local community. We need more bike tracks, better pool equipment and activities, a cafe restaurant in the park. Things to see and do in and around Euroa should be easily accessible. The influx of visitors should drive our local economy.

Business Suggestions

- Most important that we utilise our central position in the middle of the state on the Hume Highway. This provides endless opportunities. Sharing of resources is completely critical.
- I think that the Strathbogie Shire has enormous potential. Businesses need to work together and support one another. Promote business to business trading within the shire.
- It has been a great area for business and we are expanding every year. It is a good town to do business.
- Support local business to grow and prosper through proper business planning.
- Investment in the future ie. encourage clever technologies and markets, not just more of the same. We must be ready to keep up with and be part of the changes coming, eg. prefabricated buildings, battery storage, energy transformation, on-line learning, and resource management.
- More manufacturing. No dirty industries, only clean industries. Development must fit within sustainable planning parameters; clever development must come before "development at any cost". Attract entrepreneurs who can help bring positive and sustainable change, eg. agricultural diversification, environmental tourism, waste management technology, architectural and transport innovators.
- Do not make it so hard for new businesses to start up they need to be helped not held up. Don't rely on large businesses to come here. Advocate for the development of existing employers.
- We are in a prime position to expand business but are limited by not having an industrial area. We also have a large business that we could not bring here as there was no industrial area. This business is now operating from Melbourne. This was a loss to the shire as we could have provided employment.

- Better quality accommodation. Additional accommodation for visitors to our shire.

Strathbogie Shire Council

- Council needs to promote area. Ensure "good news" stories are widely publicised to promote area. Be seen, be positive, be proactive, Promote! Encourage existing businesses and new industry through appropriate rezoning of land and flexibility of rules.
- Council to realise the importance and significance of manufacturing and all businesses operating locally. Council should support local businesses within the shire and not outsource.
- Reduce the amount of red tape to actually get something done. Take the weight off the volunteers of the shire and employ people/students to actually get some events/marketing happening.
- Suggest Council provide a directory of services for businesses to promote their products and services.
- We need to gain relationships with other shire councils both here and abroad and benchmark our shire against others and openly document the results good and bad.
- Economy of scale is an issue and, as a small shire, Strathbogie Shire could consider merging with adjoining shires.
- More time and money on external infrastructure and less in office and non productive staff. Council to manage costs better to reduce expenditure. Demonstrate the Council working with the people and actually earning their dollars.
- Many farms on the tableland are too small to make a living from. Allow the subdivision of land in certain areas to 2 to 20 ha and attract more rate payers to the shire. Mostly these small lots are more productive than larger properties on the tableland. Many of the local farmers already lease properties from Melbournians so to reduce the size of holding will increase rate payers and income without losing production.
- Improve drainage in existing industrial estate.
- Advocate and provide assistance support from the Council to apply for grants.

Liveability

- Develop Euroa as a community for people working in Melbourne. Take housing price pressure off Melbourne. Be proactive in developing fast transport links to Melbourne and develop Euroa as a quality secondary education centre.
- Make the towns more liveable with parks, footpaths, trails and car parks. People have moved to Euroa to live and one of the reasons is that Euroa has a very good golf club/course. We need a gym for residents & visitors. A skate ramp to keep the kids off the footpaths.
- Parents need to be demanding to live in Euroa so that their children can secure the best education in Victoria.
- Seek funding for hospital beds (public) in shire. Public beds for hospital would encourage more people to live here. Advocate for the development of existing employers, eg. provision of sub acute, public beds at Euroa Health, the only hospital facility on the Strathbogie Shire with 24/7 medical services.

People

- Funding to attract professionals to live in town.
- Diversity of population is reasonable.
- Farmers are an ageing population and need incentives for young people to take up jobs on the land.
- Diversity in population is right on our doorstep, Goulburn Valley. Huge potential for diverse cultural partnerships (currently ignored) to benefit all, eg. universities, technology markets.
- Population is the key to growth: More people = more money = more business = more jobs! Flexibility in rules and zoning will encourage business.

Internet

- NBN is pretty important. We have NBN – let's get that as part of the strategy.

Workforce

- Improve availability of labour to work on farms.
- Create a register of local workers to work part time on farms.

Electricity

- Reduce cost of electricity for business.

Survey Feedback

Feedback was provided on the survey from both online and printed versions with need-to-improve responses generally falling into the areas of relevance and format.

Relevance

- This survey is disappointing and frustrating as it bears minimal relevance to the horse industry. Most not applicable to us. None of the above are applicable.
- The questions asked are mostly irrelevant for farming partnerships. Does not really take into account small primary producers. More a town survey than a rural survey. Not applicable to our activities. Good luck with conclusions. I have not filled in the latter questions as most were irrelevant to my expertise.
- I cannot answer some of the questions due to the nature of my business, being at home and flexible working hours.
- How much money spent on this survey?, keeping someone in a job, this waste of money, should be spent on roads.

Format

- The survey format could have been more user friendly.
- I think your survey is very negative.
- Not a well constructed survey. Worse than completing the census.

The above feedback has been taken on-board and will be used to improve future surveys.



Conclusion

Business Euroa conducted a survey of businesses across Strathbogie Shire region to find out what makes the economy tick. Business owners and managers provided useful information as to 140 enterprises representing just over 10% of the total number of businesses within the shire region.

Survey findings describe a well established cohort of businesses and organisations exhibiting some confidence. Most businesses (69%) have been operating for over 10 years and just under half expect sales turnover to increase this financial year with 41% planning capital investments within 2 years.

However, when asked about business gaps, respondents sent a clear message that what is frustrating is a lack of internet access and internet speed, insufficient of mobile phone coverage, and market forces reducing sales prices. Additional business gaps appeared as Strathbogie Shire Council property rates, roads and operations, along with deficiencies in internet coverage, caring for the environment and attracting suitable employees.

Further insights were drawn from respondents around opportunities to grow businesses and increase employment. Within suggested opportunities listed in the survey, respondents chose as most important: Attract new businesses to shire region; Promote industries with potential for growth; Obtain government infrastructure grants for expanding businesses; Expand local manufacturing; Promote Strathbogie Shire region; Attract more people; Expand value-added capability; and Develop diversity of business types. Additional ideas for opportunities were sought and they include: Improve business practices; Improve Strathbogie Shire Council operations; and Enhance liveability within the shire region.

Business owners and managers have answered the call for their views and identified frustrating business gaps that are what's missing or difficult and negatively impacts upon business performance. The closing of these gaps may then stimulate business improvements and probably open pathways for business growth and increased employment. Similarly, respondents' suggestions and ideas for opportunities, if acted upon, would likely bring forth positive outcomes in terms of growing businesses and creating jobs. The challenge now is to take notice of what's been contributed by local business people and continue to engage with this very important sector of the Strathbogie Shire economy in order to make the most of the possibilities before us.

Next Steps

The findings of the survey have been assembled and it's time to share what we have gleaned and give light to the observations and remarks of our local business people. This report will be circulated to survey participants and shared on local business network web sites and beyond. Follow up surveys may be undertaken including an annual or biennial business survey.

The idea is to raise awareness of business gaps that frustrate business operators and provide feedback to inform decision making and encourage the pursuit of solutions to these every day problems faced by our sample of businesses.

A whole range of opportunities have been raised within this survey on how to grow the local economy's business base and expand employment across the shire region. As a business community we have an opening to come together and explore options to overcome business gaps and seize opportunities for the benefit of business owners, employees and wider community members.

Let's all step into a brighter future.