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17th November 2014

General Manager

Mr Danny Green

P O Box 11

Gloucester NSW 2422

Dear Sir

**Re: GLOUCESTER TOWN CENTRE SUBMISSION**

The Gloucester Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc. (Gloucester Business Chamber) thanks Gloucester Shire Council and the Councillors for the opportunity to put forward our views that address the proposed Town Centre Study endorsed for public exhibition and comment as invited by Council on the 15th October 2014.

Our submission will communicate the major and general concerns that Chamber has should these plans progress as proposed.

This submission is a starting point for discussion, ideas generation and application to create a framework enabling the economic, social, environmental objectives as outlined in our submission to be realised.

We would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with Council to develop a strategic position for the Gloucester Town Centre to help deliver on those objectives for the benefit of the Gloucester community.

Repeatedly the Chamber as well as the public has provided feedback for the Town Centre Study that appears once again to be ignored. All issues that have been brought to the attention of planners, architects and the Council in general are not on the plan. As the plan presented to Council is stamped 2014 it is still overall the same plan albeit with a change of the Meeting Place to two way traffic as to what was put forward in 2012. We believe for Gloucester to thrive and survive our community needs to be involved, informed and engaged in robust, respectful discussion about the future of our town. We have concerns that there is an overarching strategy for Gloucester, of which we are only fed pieces ad hoc, and this approach has gone on for years.

The disruption of the raised pavement sections of the CBD would prove costly and unnecessary to businesses and it is envisaged by implementing these changes to the CBD there would be a huge economic cost to those directly affected and the community as a whole. As per the Economics at Large strategy, the majority of Gloucester’s population is consists mainly of people over the age of 60 and therefore the CBD would not wish to see the loss of any more car spaces within it.

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The Town Centre has a country ambience valued by residents and visitors alike.

It would be appreciated if a copy of the document “Town Centre Study” with proposed changes be provided to the Gloucester Business Chamber before it is presented to Council for approval.

Yours in co-operation

Mrs Yvonne Reynolds

President

Gloucester Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc.

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**GLOUCESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY INC. SUBMISSION RE**

**GLOUCESTER TOWN CENTRE STUDY**

**The submission will address the proposals endorsed for public exhibition and comment as invited by Council on the 15th October 2014. The submission will communicate major and general concerns the Chamber has should this progress as proposed. Chamber notes that as the Council is in severe economic stress at present and even with a proposed rate increase would be unable to fund this strategy in the near to medium future.**

**This submission communicates concerns about the proposals presented and is given by Chamber, as a representative for business in Gloucester, to Council. Chamber’s officers are available for further clarification, if necessary, of the points raised herein.**

**1. PROPOSED WORKS – CHURCH STREET**

**Removal of overhead power lines:**

We consider this as unnecessary and should be left for the power suppliers to deal with when required.

**Incorporate new heritage street lighting:**

As before this is considered unnecessary

**Implement a 20km/ph speed limit-Church Street:**

Traffic manages quite well under the existing speed limits-so we see no good reason for another reduction.

**Continuation of Awnings:**

Existing buildings e.g. the old Westpac on the corner of Church & Denison streets never had awnings. However if a decision is made to have these installed Council should pay for any such additions and alterations.

**Signage:**

Reduce signage poles by combining signage where possible especially close to pedestrian crossings. Revamp the streetscape by removing redundant and co-ordinate signage.

**Pedestrian Crossings:**

Improve the visibility of pedestrian crossings by the removal of hedges and under trimming of existing trees. Incorporate hardy ground covers/low level such as Dianella at crossings

**Construction of raised thresholds:**

Where thresholds are raised to footpath levels, where or how will stormwater flooding be mitigated?.

We have some concern in relation to potential ponding between these thresholds in times of heavy downfalls-particularly at night when drains can become blocked, remain uncleared and flooding with resultant loss of trade by businesses could occur.

Car parking spaces will be reduced with resultant loss of trade by businesses and shopkeepers.

* **Investigate the opportunity of a kiosk in the meeting place:**

Will take custom away from the V.I.C. if a kiosk is put in place.

* **Extend the Meeting Place to create a full pedestrian mall:**

As per our discussion at the Council meeting on the 28th October 2014 re the Draft Plans on public display, in Councils opinion the Meeting Place issue has been resolved and will be removed from the plan.

* **Denison street east of Church Street:**

See above

* **Enhance connections to Church Street:**

Encouraging the use of rear entrances to buildings on the laneways for pedestrian access to Church Street would be an imposition on the occupants of such buildings, particularly in regard to security as well as congestion within the premises on busy days. Such increased pedestrian traffic would also increase the risk of litigation by anyone who may suffer an injury whilst using business premises purely as a thoroughfare. The risk could also affect insurance premiums.

* **Current effect on properties-western corners of Church and Hume Streets**

Unfortunately these properties are shown on the plan as being dramatically, affected by the, “proposed only” changes to this intersection. This therefore places their current owners at both financial and saleability disadvantages if they wish to sell their properties. How does Council propose to alleviate this unwanted situation that has been inflicted upon them through no fault of their own?

**2. LANEWAYS**

* **Formalise the laneways between buildings as public rights of ways:**
* **Incorporate connections where possible to link land uses:**
* **Formalisation of Billabong Lane to allow pedestrian/cycle connections and street tree planting-Billabong Lane:**

Billabong Lane’s major function is to provide unfettered access for deliveries to the rear of Church Street businesses and therefore any redevelopment should not in any way adversely affect this existing practical and satisfactory situation.

The laneway between Darrel’s Gourmet Butchery and Home Hardware is privately owned and also would be far too narrow to accommodate the suggested alfresco activities.

The laneway between Yates & Twomey and Autolec is a right of carriageway and not a pedestrian thoroughfare.

The resumption of a section of Foodworks parking area in order to provide a pedestrian walkway from Church Street to the rear of the Senior Citizens’ facility will result in an additional loss of off street parking spaces.

**3. BILLABONG PARK**

* **Construction of a pedestrian/cycleway bridge over Billabong Creek-King Street to Boundary Street:**

Impractical and expensive

**4. GATEWAYS/ENTRIES**

**Incorporate gateway as part of Council’s long term strategy for a community facility-Southern gateway:**

***2.3 Draft Town Centre Study and DCP Provisions***

***178/14 RESOLVED that Council endorse the draft Gloucester Town Centre Study (July 2014) for exhibition as the Draft DCP 2014 Part E – Character Statements for public review and comment subject to amendment by deleting the reference to a Visitor/Welcome Centre being located at the site of the old Scout Hall.***

***(Cr Hoggett/Cr Tersteeg)***

**As this reference is still on the plan and is to be removed from the document we the Chamber still feel very strongly that our remarks from our previous submission still stand.**

The Chamber objects strongly to the establishment of this proposed facility at this particular location. Undoubtedly the site would be ideal for the relocation of the V.I.C. together with toilet facilities and also the inclusion of an anchor tenant who would also provide food and beverages. There is also an existing well stocked service station opposite the proposed development.

Therefor this facility would virtually become a “one-stop shop” and would meet the needs of most travellers heading either North or South, together with southbound motorists from the northwest once they became aware of the facility. Those heading south from Taree already have a directional sign at the intersection of the Bucketts Way and Ravenshaw Street.

Motorists heading north when departing the facility would have a choice of three egress routes from Gloucester.

If heading to Taree or the North Coast-turn right into Philip Street and if to Tamworth and the New England-turn left into Boundary Street. Otherwise, if heading to either of the above - drive down Church Street -through the CBD. We believe the motorists, unless they had good reason to drive into the CBD, would take either of the first two options depending on the direction they were travelling.

These comments still hold true for towns where a bypass has been put in and the town suffers economically.

Surely the V.I.C. needs to be located either in a central position or on a dedicated route without any obvious alternative deviations away from our Town Centre.

With Woolworth’s and another service station now a reality, the economy of Gloucester is bleak enough and if the Gateway proposal becomes a reality, many of them, particularly those depending on the travelling public, will be battling to survive.

**Eastern Gateway:** Needs revamping.

**Southern Gateway:** Gardens around the revamped Scout Hall precinct would be an improvement.

**5. PARKING AREAS**

* **Provide additional car, bus, and RV parking – Boundary Street**

This location is quite a distance from the main street and would not be suitable for our aging population, will be less likely to walk distances to maintain the commercial viability of the CBD. We should be encouraging people to park within the CBD. With our aging population maybe consideration should be made for parking of gophers within the CBD. This is not in close proximity to the amenities within our beautiful park.

**6. RAILWAY STATION/DAIRY SITE**

* **Provide better access to the railway station by considering:**

1. **Relocating the railway station and car park to the west of the existing railway line.** Highly unlikely of State Government **financing** such a proposal – unnecessary and cost prohibitive.
2. **Constructing a pedestrian bridge over the railway line from the existing station to the west and construct a car park on the western side.** Unnecessary and cost prohibitive.
3. **Relocating the existing railway station to the disused dairy site further to the south.** Highly unlikely of the State Government financing such a proposal-unnecessary and cost prohibitive.
4. **Consider opportunities for the redevelopment of the former dairy site integrated with the Council building-King Street:** The Chamber would question any such action which would surely lead to further fragmentation of our centralised business district.

**7. OTHER ACTIONS**

**Heritage controls – Town Centre Heritage area:**

* **New building controls (shopfronts, awnings, corner treatments, etc.) – B2, B4 zones :**
* We feel that prohibiting the use of modern materials such as Kliplock, pre cast panels, Granosite and aluminium framed windows etc. is a retrogressive step and would not serve good design. “Heritage” type building materials such as timber framed windows etc. add much more to building costs and also more effort and expense is required to maintain their appearance. The imposition of such controls would serve as a deterrent to prospective commercial building in the CBD.
* **Abandon proposed roundabout – Hume and Church streets:**

**As this is still on the plan we strongly object to its inclusion. The present design that has been done for the Woolworth’s development is difficult enough for traffic (especially trucks) and a number of car parking spaces that were there previously have been removed.**

* **S94 Plan Review:**

Could Council please explain to the Chamber, why there is such disparity with S94 contributions

imposed on a number of Gloucester businesses, in comparison to Woolworths and the recent new Medical Centre approved this year. This is one of the many factors contributing to being unable to entice new business to town, that with the constraints from the Planning department that are being responsible for entrepreneurs and owners of property in the Industrial Estate for instance to just give up and our now selling their property that they have invested in over many years and will go elsewhere to invest. Yet another loss to Gloucester.

* **Relocation of Industrial users-West of Billabong Lane:**

Business operators in this location and opposite the park amenities were most disturbed over their current premises not being shown on the plan. No doubt this is an indication that these sites will ultimately be acquired and redeveloped, with the businesses involved receiving a satisfactory deal in their relocation and that their existing trade and services will be maintained without detriment.

They are also in the same situation to the property owners on the corner of Church & Hume Streets, as well as the two properties (garages) on the western end of Hume Street.

We thank you for the opportunity to tender this submission.

Yours in co-operation

Yvonne Reynolds

President

Gloucester Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc.