

***Building Sustainable Small Business program
2008-2009
Feedback and participation report***



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***Part One:
Building Sustainable Small Business program
Participation Summary***

Workshops

In the Scenic Rim Region a series of 3 workshops were held in 2008 and 2009 in Beaudesert, Tamborine Mountain and Boonah, followed by an end-of-year Strategic Planning Workshop each year, in partnership with Scenic Rim Regional Council.

Approximately 121 people attended these workshops.

In the Gold Coast region 5 workshops were held in 2009 including full-day workshops at Robina and Yatala (in partnership with EnviroIndustry Gold Coast) and a series of 3 workshops at Currumbin (in partnership with Connecting Southern Gold Coast). These workshops attracted approximately 60 people.

Five additional workshops with lecturer Tim Winton of Permaforest Trust were held in Beaudesert, primarily for participants in the BSSB Mentoring, Training and Leadership program and open to other BSSB participants.

Networking

An initial launch of the program was held in February 2008 and two networking events were held, one each year. More had been planned but rsvp response was not sufficient to proceed with additional events.

The majority of networking happened during the workshops and as a result of the collaboration that developed between participants attending the workshops.

BSSB encouraged business participation in the 2008 EcoExpo and 2009 Our Habitat, Our Home exhibition.

Enewsletter and websites

Regular enewsletters were distributed throughout 2008 and 2009 with 238 people registered to receive the enewsletter including people who had attended the workshops, people from stakeholder organisations and people who had self-registered via the website.

The BSSB website provided full information on the program and supporting resources. The *Sustainability Planning Guide* received 503 website hits, and the *Sustainability Checklist* received 105 website hits, indicating the strong website visitation.

The BSSB website will be housed in the Ethos Foundation website from March 2010 and will continue to make information available.

Directory

The Sustainable Scenic Rim online website was made available from early 2009 and the directory had 29 listings at the end of February 2010 including businesses and enterprises in the Scenic Rim and nearby regions.

A hard-copy flyer promoting the Directory was made available from early 2009.

This website is now being expanded by Scenic Rim Regional Council in collaboration with the Ethos Foundation into the Sustainable Scenic Rim community website.

Mentoring, Training and Leadership program

23 people from 17 businesses and enterprises participated in the program. 13 businesses participated in the full program including Permaforest Trust training, and 4 businesses participated in Mentoring only.

Most businesses/enterprises were from the Scenic Rim Region or previous Beaudesert Shire Council region, with 3 from neighbouring regions. The program received excellent feedback from all participants.

**Part Two:
Free Workshops Series
Participant Feedback 2009**

Feedback forms were provided to all participants. The following is a collation of comments from the 2009 Scenic Rim workshops. Feedback from the Gold Coast workshops is also available upon request.

**Workshop One: Beaudesert, Tamborine Mountain, Boonah
Topic: Local Living Economy**

What was the most interesting and/or helpful from today's workshop?

- Aspects of the Local Living Economy and how it relates to tourism;
- Networking exchange of ideas, bigger picture of development/sustainability issues on Scenic Rim and council initiatives;
- To see how similar issues to those facing my community are looked at here;
- Regional Development snapshot;
- Brainstorming session;
- Developing carbon footprints;
- Seeing what ideas come from a group workshop for sustainability;
- Future vision and thinking long term;
- Hearing people's feedback on Council's services/lack of services;
- Comments and input by people of varying business interests and perceived solutions;
- Opened my mind to the resources and numerous ways in which a business can overcome their problems;
- Local Living Economy concept
- Interacting with other businesses – learning from their experiences;
- Group work – discussions afterwards;
- Networking – thought provocation;
- The information;
- Benefits of interconnected business
- Broad base of knowledge on sustainability Eco Biz, and contacts;
- Learning how to keep economic power within the community;
- Very interesting on how to reduce carbon footprint and how to be sustainable;
- Awareness, knowing that Government does understand the issues;
- Group activity at the end using what we had learnt;
- How it was important for more communication between the people and Council/Government;
- And how the community can be more sustainable for the future;
- Everything really;

How can we improve the workshops?

- Keep them coming!
- Wow, so good – have to process it;
- Get them out to more people;
- Excellent, keep the same format;
- More time to delve into topics
- Very happy with the morning;
- More contacts or lists of Government organisations who can help;
- Being more practical;
- You have done extremely well;
- It was great;

Any other comments?

- Looking forward to next month;
- Sally and Jan are very professional;
- Good presenter – long enough

Feedback rating:

Total feedback forms: 25
Rated Excellent: 12
Rated Very Good: 11
Rated Good: 2
Rated Average: 0
Rated Poor: 0

Workshop Two:	Beaudesert, Tamborine Mountain and Boonah
Topic:	Resource Sustainability

What was the most interesting and/or helpful from today's workshop?

- Re-focusing my goals re resources;
- Eco-sustainability for our business and identifying the ways we can continue with this;
- Hearing stories/examples from participants;
- Everything – great workshop, having access to professionals;
- Open discussion;
- Great education;
- The Story of Stuff DVD (several comments)
- To reinforce the waste we use & how it can be reduced on a more proficient level;
- The information on the Ecobiz program;
- The networking and BSSB resources;
- Everything, especially group discussions;
- Interaction with others;
- Checklist (several comments);
- All was interesting and helpful;
- How to start making my business sustainable;

How can we improve the workshops?

- Tough act to improve, probably have less structured/formal presentations – allow for discussions to really flow (facilitated);
- Well researched, well done;
- Longer – I could pick these people's brains for much longer;

- Have more business people come along;
- They are very good already – perhaps more time – all day;
- Weekly information – emails to encourage us to help with expanding your immense resources;
- Perhaps an extra half an hour would be advantageous;
- More physical activity – pump music etc to give it a bit more life;
- All was interesting and helpful;
- Inputs/outputs process needed to be drawn together;

Any other comments:

- Good awareness creator;
- Keep up the good work and thank you for all your help;
- I wish this was ongoing on a monthly basis – networking ideas;
- Enjoyed discussion of 6 thinking hats;

Feedback rating:

Total feedback forms received:	19
Rated Excellent:	12
Rated Very good:	5
Rated Good:	2
Rated Average:	0
Rated Poor:	0

<p>Workshop Three: Beaudesert, Tamborine Mountain and Boonah Topic: Strategic Sustainability</p>

What was the most interesting and/or helpful from today's workshop?

- Final summary of morning and applying to business;
- Need to get myself more familiar with what other small businesses are doing, including their sustainability measure;
- Resilience and more strategic systems which I can put in place for my business;
- Networking, group discussions, connecting with people of similar intention;
- General strategic sustainability info;
- Encouraging us to recognise and appreciate what we have here in the Scenic Rim but to be ever searching for new sustainable ideas;
- To reinforce to me the importance of the “100 mile meal” but not just with food;
- Collaborative voice;
- Alignment, meeting you guys;
- Reminder of the context that my interests/skills come alive in;
- Listening to delegates passions and gaining information to put into practice in my own environment;
- Always enjoy the interaction with other community members;
- Makes you go away and think about what you are doing and what you should be doing better;
- We can make a difference – change starts with us;
- By building networks we can become more resilient and sustainable;
- Thinking outside of the square;
- Creating greater awareness;
- Great resources and information;
- What we can do locally to make our community more resilient in the face of change;
- All of the activities of the session were helpful/interesting;

- I appreciated hearing and expressing everyone's input;
- Allowing for feedback and discussions and additional info being discussed by participants;
- Ideas shared by all who attended;
- SWOT analysis;
- Actually identifying what we as a community have to offer and how we can change to help reduce our carbon footprint.

How can we improve the workshops?

- A lot of big concepts with limited time – pre-reading for each session to set concept;
- Maybe a few more concrete examples of what other communities are doing, to act as a springboard for ideas;
- Perhaps have some key personnel at one of the workshops so we can have access to questions and perhaps get answers;
- Encourage participation from a broader business community;
- I think they worked very well;
- Sally is an inspirational speaker;
- Done so well;
- Love it – need an advanced course;
- Role play if time permits;
- More;
- Keep having them;
- How can excellent be improved;

Any other comments?

- Very good series of workshops;
- Will keep in touch;
- Sally is an excellent communicator;
- Where to from here?
- Sally is an excellent presenter;
- Certainly well organized and smoothly presented – thanks for the summary at the end.

Feedback rating:

Total feedback forms received:	19
Rated Excellent:	10
Rated Very good:	8
Rated Good:	1
Rated Average:	0
Rated Poor:	0

**Part Three:
BSSB Workshop Discussions – Boonah, Gold Coast and Scenic Rim
Notes – November-December 2009**

In November and December 2009, the final BSSB workshops were held at Boonah, the Currumbin Ecovillage and Beaudesert under the title “Strategic Sustainability – Resilience and Prosperity”. All three workshops focused on identifying the key strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats around creating more resilience and prosperity in the South East Queensland, the Scenic Rim and Southern Gold Coast regions.

The ideas and questions that emerged from all three workshops were extremely valuable and are combined here to offer springboards for the further design and implementation of integrated sustainability in the region.

In this context our definition of resilience was: the capacity for social-ecological systems to maintain their form and function even in the face of unexpected shocks and impacts to the system.

Our definition of prosperity revolved around social-economic systems that include health, wellbeing, and the capacity to flourish beyond material and money-based activities.

The key question that guided the workshops at Boonah and Currumbin was:

How can we support the transition to resilience and prosperity in this region?

In response participant feedback included:

- Strengthening and maintaining local villages and communities
- Identifying/noticing and mapping the skills, people, organisations and strengths in the community:
 - making this information widely available and accessible
 - using/utilising these local skills and strengths
 - identifying the gaps and finding ways to fill these gaps locally
 - assisting cross-business, cross-sector and cross-community networking and support
 - encouraging and supporting diverse and meaningful businesses, goods, services and innovation
- Connecting our villages and communities in ways that strengthen us all and meet our needs (eg) good news and good stories can spread fast
- Focus on local food:
 - farmers markets
 - growing food locally
 - make it and bake it markets
 - revitalising grandmother skills eg baking, preserving, seed saving, gardening etc
- Managing population growth proactively and for sustainability outcomes:
 - Identifying, understanding and working within the carrying capacity of our natural resources and ecosystem services
 - To support the amenity of our region
 - To maintain the unique and special qualities of our region – social and ecological

- Support of local businesses and organisations by local residents and local businesses
- Showcasing and nurturing the unique skills, goods and services in the region
- Reconnecting local communities with local government
- Nurturing our regional natural environment and ecosystem services
- Addressing transport and mobility needs in the region – recognising and enabling the enterprise opportunities in local public transport provision for example; and reducing our reliance on just road transport
- Creating and building our region's education services and sector – making the links between local business, the local economy, education services, young people, and skills development
- Strengthening, maintaining and creating ways to grow a sense of belonging and community locally
- Nurturing people and organisations with sustainability and grandmother skills and knowledge
- Support for well-managed, high value tourism because of our unique natural environment and local communities
- Maintaining and strengthening our population base to ensure there is a diversity of skills, people, local business and local economic capacity
- Maintain and improve soil fertility and health
- Developing educational tourism
- Ensuring cultural diversity
- Recognising and realising the opportunities for new, local businesses out of the challenges and threats that are beginning to impact on our communities
- Supporting health and wellbeing for people, families, communities, businesses
- Increasing our knowledge and adaptability to engage with changing circumstances
- Reframing our lenses on the world to one of abundance and opportunity
- Leveraging more effective government support for community health and wellbeing and transition to integrated sustainability
- Sharing a common goal; sharing ideas, information and resources across businesses – opening up access and availability
- Unity
- Mentoring
- Staying engaged with the process
- Seeing and supporting relationships all along supply and value chains in business
- Cross-boundary collaboration between SEQ and NNSW
- Finding our niches and telling our business and community stories well – branding and beyond
- Producing and making available quality, durable, ethical and meaningful goods and services
- Ensuring appropriate infrastructure is in place, both physical and social infrastructure
- Ongoing ability to find a dynamic balance between consistency and adaptability
- Taking responsibility, being responsible

Strategic Planning Workshop - Summary

In a regionally-focused strategic thinking workshop at Beaudesert in early December 2009, participants were invited to identify the questions that would more deeply explore the transition to resilience and sustainability in the Scenic Rim.

In this workshop we discussed the difference between:

- Reducing unsustainability (eco-efficiency etc) and
- Creating sustainability (enduring wellbeing, innovation, beyond material growth etc)
- Solving problems and
- Designing new systems

The questions identified by participants included:

- How do you make a business enduring, sustainable and elegantly integrated with family life and nature?
- What is my intent?
- Where is the Scenic Rim Regional Council up to in understanding and implementing sustainability principles, initiatives and activities? (eg) composting toilet regulations, renewable energy initiatives etc
- What's working in other communities, regions and councils in terms of sustainability transition?
- How can we better research and understand the kinds of impacts particular products will have for our businesses? Both positive and negative impacts
- Do we have the mettle/fortitude/courage to ask the right questions and work on the right choices?
- What is the sustainability vision I need to create, understand and work towards in my own business and in my community? How do I create this vision (for myself)?
- How, when I have a clear sustainability vision, do I work with my clients to help them create sustainability in their businesses?
- How do we make sustainability a priority and a compelling story for small business?
- What place might sustainability reporting have for small business?
- How can we create an accessible, relevant, working and real networking hub and process for small business in the Scenic Rim? That's valuable, relevant and real?
- How can we more deeply engage with exploring, understanding and applying costs, savings, and benefits of sustainability that enable the full benefits of sustainability for small business? How do we expand our understanding of sustainability investment?
- What practical ways will Council implement and support sustainability in the Scenic Rim?
- How can we create the conditions that support exploration, research and learning in and from action for small business in the sustainability arena?
- How do we find the people and organisations that can help us grapple with and address these questions? Councils, businesses, state and federal government departments and people, innovators, community development workers etc
- What would it take to create a proactively sustainable system that foregrounds/promotes and makes accessible, the best products/technologies for enduring health and sustainability? Holistic sustainability – ecological base; economic, social, participatory...How do we redesign the system to create a 'nudge' system that makes sustainability easy and right?
- How might we synchronise innovation and creativity for sustainability with government responsibilities including in the area of regulations and policy (that will support innovation, creativity and sustainability and dissuade/penalise/stop unsustainability)?

**Part Four:
BSSB Survey Qualitative and Quantitative Feedback summary
(January/February 2010)**

To supplement the feedback gathered during the 2009 Workshop discussions and Strategic Planning Workshop, an online Survey was offered to BSSB participants in early 2010. Eight people completed the survey.

The following feedback was gathered.

Key emerging challenges and opportunities for small business in the Scenic Rim Region over the next 5 years?

- Networking local support;
- Peak oil;
- Community;
- Skills to be developed in the community include – the psyche/mindset and the ability/skills to share knowledge and resources obtained from government funding and grants in the wider community, and to build on the foundations – staff training, learning from each other, continuity and momentum, evolving the economic base, innovating and expanding, not copying or duplicating – less reliance on volunteer organisations and input and more support for emerging business – proper jobs and proper rates of pay to build more consistent and reliable economic fundamentals and less reliance on government funding, charity and social security;
- Contributing to a sustainable community and encouraging sustainable practices within particular industries;
- Becoming a cohesive regional community to optimize relevant local business opportunities;
- Building vibrant and resilient local living economies and businesses that meet local community needs (and emerging sustainability and resilience needs);
- The balance of efficiency and affordability;
- The balance of compliance (Council) and affordability and sustainability;
- The effectiveness of sustainability and economy of scales;
- Water supply, local food supply;
- Opportunities for growth of boutique food businesses;
- Dealing with State and Local Government;
- Cost to implement sustainability actions is a burden on small business that often struggle anyway financially.

Key actions Scenic Rim Region should take to best manage the challenges and opportunities?

- Sub-regional planning;
- Sustain school, further education and adult education to focus on training needs in the local workforce;
- Foster employment and business opportunities for local residents;
- Build wider regional networks for mutual sustainability and efficient use of resources;
- Encourage simplification and standardization of systems to minimise waste and duplication;
- Ensure basic utilities are adequate and reliable – roads, water, electricity, communications, health services;

- Scenic Rim is a developing community short on capital and in need of massive infrastructure works in so many areas;
- Improving networking and knowledge of complimentary businesses to create business partnerships – this may be achieved through local luncheons or breakfast meetings or twilight networking meetings featuring networking between like industries;
- Increased use of the web database of sustainable businesses;
- Collate and understand the region's ecological research to better recognise social-ecological tipping points;
- Manage economic and community development for greater resilience and based on this knowledge, Council and community need to work together to set key sustainability targets such as the reduction in carbon emissions, water quality, soil quality, bushfire management etc;
- Develop a more integrated approach to town planning and business development that incorporates the elements of sustainability at the grassroots;
- There needs to be an understanding that small business cannot afford to develop Council infrastructure and sustainable practices under the current system if they are going to survive;
- Refuse to allow high density urban development on valuable arable land;
- Maintain/increase exposure for sustainable projects through best management practices and followed up with practical examples indicating the positives which come with the territory;
- Be aware of and be sensitive to the cost of implementing sustainability actions when it comes to implementing costs and additional rules etc;
- Continue to give assistance to small business – may I take this opportunity to give an accolade to Scenic Rim Regional Council for supporting the BSSB initiative.

Additional resources, programs and activities that would assist your business to continue developing in a sustainable manner?

- Workshops and think tanks sharing resources;
- Sharing ideas;
- Draft/example plans showing ways to incorporate sustainability from a new business to well-developed business;
- Opportunities to get together;
- Workshop learning to learn about calculating carbon footprints and how to become carbon neutral;
- Networking opportunity to discuss ways to buy in bulk to save resources;
- Recycling on a large scale for multiple businesses;
- Electronics recycling in the Scenic Rim;
- Ongoing workshops would be great;
- Formal and informal business networking opportunities;
- Continuing sustainable business and enterprise programs like BSSB and the Agro-Tourism program;
- Rebates, access to new technology, systems and resources to not only encourage us but make it attractive to change over to sustainable practices;
- DIY retrofit information for converting to green energy;
- Continue with the program and continue to provide guest speakers at forums e.g. Tim Winton and others;
- Opportunities to let people know that we, as small businesses, exist.

Quantitative Information questions:

Number of surveys received: 8

Quantitative information received is not sufficient to be statistically sufficient to provide an accurate indication. However all responses indicated that:

- a) They had a greater understanding of sustainability issues and planning;
- b) That they now placed greater emphasis on sustainability planning;
- c) That they had taken specific action steps since participating in the BSSB program with the most common including:
 - Reviewed resource use (8);
 - Implemented resource efficiency activities (6);
 - Developed or updated business plan (7);
 - Changed the marketing or positioning of their business to include a sustainability focus (6);
 - Undertaken further professional development, training or mentoring (8);
 - Increased business purchases from local businesses (7);
 - Participated in networks, alliances or partnerships with other local businesses (6);
 - Increased business involvement in local community (7);

Part Five:
Recommendations for future sustainable small business actions for the Scenic Rim Region

During the two years of coordinating the BSSB program in the Scenic Rim Region, the Ethos Foundation learned a tremendous amount about the needs, aspirations and concerns of small businesses. Much of this learning is collated in this report. Scenic Rim Regional Council is to be commended for its commitment to the BSSB program and for supporting the recognition and emergence of sustainable small businesses in the Scenic Rim Region. Given the success of the BSSB program and the relevant, intelligent feedback received from BSSB participants, the Ethos Foundation would like to present some potential pathways that Scenic Rim Regional Council and indeed, other local governments, could consider to build on the momentum generated by BSSB amongst the small business community.

Initiatives underway in 2010

- **Smart-Growth Business Workshop series** – four workshops to be held in Beaudesert, Tamborine Mountain and Boonah during 2010. The aims of these workshops are:
 - To assist Scenic Rim small businesses reframe their understanding of business and economy in ways that better integrate sustainability, resilience, innovation and growth
 - To assist small businesses apply sustainability principles and practices to their operations with practical and relevant tools, skills, case studies and knowledge and in ways that enhance and strengthen their business and local economies
 - To inspire and motivate small business owners and operators with examples and case studies from businesses, communities, cities and local economies from around the world.

A joint initiative by Scenic Rim Regional Council and the Ethos Foundation

- **Sustainable Scenic Rim Business and Community Website** – the BSSB and Sustainable Scenic Rim Business Directory have been integrated and expanded into a community sustainability website which will be publicly launched in April 2010. All BSSB resources and tools are housed in this website and the business section of the website has been further expanded. The website also contains sections for Households, Community, Schools and Youth, and Visitors. It has a sustainability events diary, Sustainable Business and Community Directory, library of sustainability articles and a range of other key tools.

A joint initiative by Scenic Rim Regional Council and the Ethos Foundation

Recommendations for future initiatives

With a growing interest in low carbon business (Scenic Rim Escapes Low Carbon Diet Program 2010, BSSB 2008-09); local, sustainable food and farming (Ethos

Foundation's Local Food and Farming Program 2008; BOSS's Sustainable Food and Farming Program 2010 – which will evolve the 2008 program for the Rim region); Buy Local First Program (Scenic Rim Regional Council's Backyard Card Program; Think Local Live Logan – Logan Office of Economic Development); sustainable tourism focused on local landscapes, communities, food etc (Scenic Rim Regional Council's Visit Scenic Rim website; Tourism Australia's Green Cauldron); and Local Living Economy (Logan Office of Economic Development; Beechmont Business & Enterprise Network's 2010 local economic leakage analysis; Beechmont Community Website, Beechmont Business Directory 2007-10), the Ethos Foundation suggests that the Scenic Rim Region and surrounding shires and regions have many of the foundations in place to design and implement an integrated, highly relevant, effective, whole-of-region Local Living Economy program.

Over the past 18 months, the Ethos Foundation has partnered with the Business Alliance for Local Living Economy, the Logan Office of Economic Development and we hope, Connecting Southern Gold Coast, to develop a variety of Local Living Economy activities and projects in South East Queensland.

We believe we have the skills and expertise to continue collaborating closely with Scenic Rim Regional Council and surrounding local governments to evolve the BSSB program and the existing and emerging business and sustainability initiatives in the region into a cohesive and relevant Local Living Economy program. The first step to begin this process is simply to meet with Council's Regional and Economic Development team to discuss the economic development priorities and aspirations as well as to brief management and staff teams about the Local Living Economy concept and describe what an integrated, whole-of-shire LLE program might look like.

Ethos believes the shires and regions within South East Queensland are ideally placed to undertake this type of holistic program and that such a program would benefit the businesses, economies and communities of the region in measurable, relevant ways.

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