

Township Marketing Plan

Uralla Township
Marketing Plan

Uralla Shire Council
Kevin Abey
Economic Development
Specialist

Prepared by Linda Hailey,
Hailey Enterprises Pty Ltd
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Hailey Enterprises Pty Ltd

ABN 81 069 869 638

Suite 30/110 Alfred Street
Millsons Point NSW 2061

☎ 02 9956 6639

☎ 02 9956 6643

🌐 www.lindahailey.com.au

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First Impressions

General

This information has been gathered from personal observation of Uralla, an orientation tour of the area by car and a retail audit of the main street. Additional information was gathered from interviews with the manager of the Visitor Information Centre and selected business owners.

Kevin Abey, Economic Development Specialist of the Uralla Shire Council acted as my guide for the town visit.

Objectives

The aim of this first phase of the consultancy is to identify the key issues that will have an impact on the future marketing of Uralla. This review involved a walking tour of Uralla.

The review encompassed:

- ▶ Signage
- ▶ Visibility
- ▶ Identity and branding
- ▶ Product stock levels
- ▶ Product ranges in stores
- ▶ Traditional versus innovative products
- ▶ Merchandising
- ▶ Street scaping
- ▶ Access and egress to main street
- ▶ Architecture
- ▶ Heritage values
- ▶ Customer service

First Impressions

Location

- ▶ Uralla is a very attractive town located approximately mid way between Sydney and Brisbane on the New England Highway and at the junction of Thunderbolts Way. Thunderbolts way provides the most direct route between Sydney and Inverell and is an alternative route between Uralla and Sydney via Walcha and Gloucester. Uralla is 20 minutes from the major centre of Armidale

Northern Approach

- ▶ The approach from Armidale is a pleasant country drive through farming land along the New England Highway.
- ▶ On the approach from Armidale there is a large billboard welcoming drivers to historic Uralla. The billboard features sheep, representing local primary industry, the bushranger Thunderbolt and the Lockheed Martin Sattelite Tracking station, which is located in Uralla. The sign also promotes local events such as the Uralla Book Festival. There is no visual image on the poster to support the "historic" claim.
- ▶ At the town perimeter there are visually plain Uralla signs in yellow and gold plus large, dominant "50 area" speed limit signs – there are no billboards and very little visual clutter on the outskirts of the town.

Southern Approach

- ▶ Thunderbolt Rock is 7 kilometres from Uralla on the Southern approach.
 - The site is owned and managed by council. There is a significant amount of graffiti on the rock and a proposal has been submitted to put a mural of Thunderbolt on the rock. If the proposal proceeds, the mural will increase the appeal of the attraction and will possibly stop graffiti
 - There is a sign at this site promoting toilets and other amenities at Uralla.
- ▶ On the approach to Uralla there is a sign which reads “Welcome to our beautiful New England”. The sign also promotes Uralla and Thunderbolt Country along with an ⓘ for information sign
 - The style of the sign is not consistent with other Uralla town signs and it is not clear whether the sign is promoting Uralla or New England.
- ▶ At the town perimeter there are Uralla signs in yellow and green which are consistent with the signs on the Northern approach. This approach also has large 50 area signs.
- ▶ On this approach there are a few smaller signs in trees promoting local businesses.
- ▶ On the outskirts of the town signs include:
 - A Uralla sign with details of elevation and population
 - “Urban area please limit compression braking” sign
 - Sign featuring details of local service clubs such as Rotary Club information
 - A Driver Reviver sign which was blank because it wasn’t open at that time. During holiday periods the Driver Reviver stop is also promoted on signs through the town centre.
- ▶ As you depart town in a Southerly direction there is a “Thank You for Visiting, See you again” sign. This is not consistent in style with other signs.
- ▶ In peak holiday times there are signs promoting the Driver Reviver stop in the main street and on the Southern approach.
- ▶ Generally speaking, town approach signs give little indication of what to expect when you arrive in the township.

Main Street

- ▶ The main street is wide and instantly appealing, particularly from the Northern approach. Heritage architecture, trees and floral displays, wide pavements, outdoor seating and easily identified browsing shops all have a positive impact.
- ▶ The main street also features two very attractive pubs with traditional wide verandas.
- ▶ There are yellow flags hanging from lampposts in the main street that are promoting the Thunderbolt Country Fair.
- ▶ There is a well-located Visitor Information Centre which is open 7 days a week
 - A new library will be built next to the VIC in 2005.
- ▶ In the main street there are tourist signs to key attractions such as McCrossin’s Mill, Iron Lace Foundry and Thunderbolts grave.
- ▶ From the Southern approach the town is less appealing with more commercial development including petrol stations, a caravan park and a number of motels, which appear to be focused on the budget market.

- ▶ There is a Military museum with a large plane and a large statue of a soldier
 - It is open most days but was closed on the day of the visit.
- ▶ The Driver Reviver stop is located in what used to be a fruit stall
 - Sign is not easy to see
 - The area is not scenic, as it is located on a suburban block with parking out the back
 - The stop is away from the main retail area.
- ▶ Residential properties appear to be neat and tidy with well-maintained gardens.
- ▶ There is an amount of heavy traffic in the main street but the noise does not appear excessive and impact is lessened compared to some other main street communities by the wide streets.
- ▶ There is an Apex Memorial Park in the main street opposite the Visitor Information Centre and Pioneer Park diagonally opposite the VIC.

Parking

- ▶ On the days of the site visit parking was plentiful. Most parking was rear to kerb, which can be challenging for “city slickers”. Spaces were wide and easily accessed.
- ▶ There is parking behind the shopping area but this appears to be mainly used by locals.
- ▶ There is parking for caravans adjacent to Apex Park and Pioneer Park but this is not well sign posted.

Architecture

- ▶ Uralla is an architecturally interesting town with a very attractive streetscape. The overall impression is of “stepping back in time”.
- ▶ Unlike many towns Uralla seems to have escaped the red brick plague and most modern buildings are sympathetic to the style of the area.
- ▶ Many retail businesses are housed in very attractive properties and most owners have capitalised on the heritage appeal with appropriate signage and colours.
- ▶ The architecture is enhanced with wide verandas, wrought iron lace and the use of pavement displays.
- ▶ The two pubs in town are very attractive and both owners have presented them to maximise their architectural appeal.
- ▶ The Visitor Information Centre is well located and although modern, is in keeping with the area.
- ▶ In addition to the main street retail architecture, Uralla also boasts a large number of heritage buildings including the Courthouse, private residences, churches and the McCrossins Mill gallery and museum. These buildings are detailed in the Heritage Walking Tour of the town.
- ▶ The interesting heritage architecture is a key benefit for Uralla.

Foundries

- ▶ An interesting feature of Uralla is the number of foundry businesses located close to the town centre. One is the oldest working foundry in Australia and is open to the public daily. The Brass & Iron Lace Foundry was used to create the distinctive street furniture and there may be potential to use the skills of this foundry in addition to Phoenix Foundry and G&C Pty Ltd to create town entrance signs or even a Uralla “souvenir”.

Branding

- ▶ There is no obvious Uralla branding in the form of a town logo although the Thunderbolt statue is used on some tourism marketing material.
- ▶ Council signage appears to feature a yellow and green theme.
- ▶ Some of the positioning statements used to promote Uralla include:
 - Historic Uralla
 - The Meeting Place
 - Thunderbolt Country
 - Historic Thunderbolt Country.
- ▶ There is no consistent font or style used for the name Uralla on signage although most tourism information including the website uralla.com uses a consistent font.

Ambience

- ▶ Uralla has a quaint, charming village feel.
- ▶ There are signs of confidence in the retail community, which seems to be thriving.
- ▶ For the visitor there is a comfortable, unpretentious feeling. The main street feels friendly and safe.
- ▶ There appears to be a strong community spirit evidenced by locals taking the time to chat in the main street, a community noticeboard and charity stall area.

Streetscaping

- ▶ Pavements are wide and generally easily accessed.
- ▶ Power lines are the only unattractive aspect of the main street
 - There are plans in place to put cables underground.
- ▶ Flags are used to promote events and add colour to the streetscape.
- ▶ There is distinctive blue bench street seating made by the local foundries.
- ▶ There is evidence of community interest in art, which enhances the streetscape:
 - The Thunderbolt statue
 - The paved section in the main shopping area featuring turtles (These symbolise the seven entrances to town)
 - A mural in the walkway to the car parking area at the rear of the shops
 - A quirky mural (person peering out from behind a dunny door), which adds to the quirky nature of the street.

Retail Mix

- ▶ There are a couple of “two in one” shops which feature a mix of products. Although Peter Phillips Sports and Toys would fit into this category it is more like a mini department store. Other “two in one” shops include the Health and Beauty lounge, Chesterfields on Bridge Street and even the Uralla Galley/Café.
- ▶ Uralla already has the core retailers to become a destination for day-trippers and a regular stopping off point for travellers
 - There are currently enough browsing shops to hold visitors for an estimated 45 minutes to an hour.
- ▶ Uralla has a strong mix of browsing shops, which would have great appeal to visitors. Many of these outlets appear to be actively targeting the tourist

market. Many include high-ticket items which would indicate a relatively affluent clientele. Browsing shops include:

- Trading Post Antiques
 - New England Antique Emporium
 - Burnet's Books
 - Gatherum Books
 - The Uralla Wool Room
 - Uralla Gallery
 - New England Quilting.
- ▶ There are also a number of mainstream retail outlets whose stock or presentation may also appeal to a visitor. These include:
 - DR's Country Clothing
 - Peter Phillips Sports and Toys
 - J & G McFarlane (Gift and homewares outlet next to Motel).
 - ▶ There is only one supermarket in town which seems to be very proactive at meeting the needs of locals and visitors.
 - ▶ In addition to the supermarket fresh food is provided by two butchers, two bakers and a fruit and vegetable retailer.
 - ▶ Day-to-day needs are met by a pharmacy/gift shop, sports, toys and gift outlet, newsagent, hardware store and small video/electrical appliance retailers.
 - ▶ There is a furniture and bedding outlet which also offers upholstery services and has a range of giftware.
 - ▶ Overall, stock in the outlets specifically targeting the local market was traditional and conservative in nature. There was some indication that the market is changing and there is call for more adventurous products which may be a response to a changing population.
 - ▶ It is assumed that the majority of locals would travel to Armidale for their major shopping needs and shop locally for day-to-day supplies
 - The supermarket obviously carefully targets the local market which may keep local dollars in town.

Retail skills

- ▶ The most noticeable aspect of Uralla is the retailers' use of A-boards and displays to promote their businesses. Most notable are the butcher with his "character" and the antique and bric a brac shops which feature interesting stock along with some potted plants.
- ▶ The majority of retailers use this promotional material well and all A Boards were placed so they did not present an obvious Occupational Health and Safety risk to passers by.
- ▶ Stock levels in most outlets were excellent. Although a couple of the fresh food retailers appeared to have very low levels of stock and in one case, some that was past it's best.
- ▶ There were a number of retail outlets that obviously had a very clear picture of their target markets. Stock was arranged attractively and logically to appeal to their potential clients. This was particularly obvious amongst some of the retailers targeting the visitor market.
- ▶ The quality of window displays varied greatly ranging from excellent to very poor. Some of the most common mistakes include:
 - Dirty windows or faded window displays that hadn't been changed in months
 - Faded or old stock in the window

- Poor lighting or lights turned off in window displays
- Little or no stock in the window
- Stock in the window that was not representative of products within the store.
- ▶ Merchandising also varied amongst outlets. Some of the most noticeable issues were:
 - Fixtures and fittings screening the view of stock
 - Stock not arranged in a logical or easy to find way
 - Little or no directional signage
 - Messy shelves
 - Lack of branding for the outlet within the shop
 - Lack of directional signage and branding within the outlet.
- ▶ It is difficult to judge customer service on one visit and it is likely customer service varies from outlet to outlet. In some communities customer service is excellent for locals and not as proactive for visitors and vice versa. In Uralla customer service seemed to be generally excellent. Staff members in the supermarket were observed packing and carrying groceries to customer's cars, in most outlets I was greeted in a positive manner and visitors generally seemed to be welcomed rather than tolerated. This was endorsed at the meeting of local business owners who rated customer service in Uralla highly.

Restaurants, Cafés and Takeaways

- ▶ There are a number of daytime eating options in Uralla including:
 - White Rose Café
 - Chesterfield's on Bridge Street
 - Thunderbolt Country Kitchen
 - Health and Beauty Shop cafe
 - Uralla Bakery
 - Moon's Bakery
 - Espresso Café (at the VIC)
 - Thunderbolt Inn
 - Gallery Café
 - BP Roadhouse
- ▶ Anecdotal evidence suggests that the standard of coffee has improved but there are still opportunities to increase quality.
- ▶ Many of the menus offer similar choices and there may be potential to increase the variety in menus across outlets.
- ▶ A couple of outlets are giving mixed messages e.g. shop presentation that does not match the style of the product.
- ▶ There appears to be little gourmet café food available.
- ▶ Dining out options include:
 - Yu Wah Chinese restaurant
 - Stokers Restaurant and Bar
 - Coachwood and Cedar Hotel
 - The Thunderbolt Inn
 - Bowling Club Restaurant
 - Golf Club Restaurant.

Tourism Potential

- ▶ Uralla has a limited amount of accommodation and is therefore unlikely to become a holiday destination in the short to medium term. However it is ideally situated to become a stop off point for travellers who wish to break their journey.
- ▶ It has a range of tourism product close to town including:
 - Museums
 - Heritage buildings
 - Thunderbolt's Rock and gravesite.
- ▶ In the surrounding area there are:
 - Scenic drives
 - Nature reserves and look outs
- ▶ It is estimated that the average spend by visitors is \$45.
- ▶ Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a strong potential to promote Uralla as a destination for day-trippers and travellers from surrounding areas. Prior to visiting Uralla I came across a number of New England residents who always stop at Uralla when they travel. There were also several who drove to Uralla for browsing and lunch.

Marketing

- ▶ A web search (Google) of Uralla (on the web) generates 54,000 entries
 - The Shire Council was listed first on this search followed by the tourism site uralla.com.
- ▶ A web search (Google) of Uralla (pages from Australia) generated 22,000 entries
 - The Shire Council site was listed first on this search followed by nsw.com. uralla.com did not appear in first four pages, probably due to the .com address.
 - The uralla.com site provides excellent information on the area whereas the nsw site provides less up to date information in a standard format.
- ▶ There are three newspapers servicing the area:
 - Armidale Express published Monday, Wednesday and Friday at \$1:10 per issue
 - The Armidale Extra (cutdown version of The Armidale Express) is delivered to homes on Wednesday's
 - The Independent is delivered free to households on Wednesdays.
- ▶ The town has a monthly Newsletter called The Uralla Wordsworth.
- ▶ The Uralla Shire Council also produces a monthly newsletter.
- ▶ The local radio stations are FM 100.3 and Armidale Community Radio 2ARM 92.1FM.
- ▶ The Uralla VIC distributes the following marketing collateral:
 - DL Uralla – The Meeting Place full colour map and attractions brochure
 - Museums in Uralla - A4 one-colour handout
 - Historic Uralla – Heritage Walking Tour – A5 leaflet
 - Exploring Uralla – a one-colour handout including Places to Eat, Arts Craft and Old Wares. Tours and Things to Do, Museums
 - Uralla Map
 - Captain Thunderbolt – A5 booklet
 - Scenic Drive Information

- Information sheets on Gostwyck Chapel and Deeargee Woolshed
- New England Regional Visitors Guide
- ▶ Uralla hosts several annual events including:
 - Uralla Book Festival – September
 - Thunderbolt Country Festival – November
 - Dog Agility Trials – September
 - Uralla Youth Festival – Easter / School Holiday Period
 - Rotary Art Show – Prior to Easter Holidays.

Uralla Focus Group

A meeting of local business owners was held on 17th day of November, 2004 from 12pm – 2pm. Participants were selected business owners from the area including retailers and service businesses.

This was an opportunity for local business operators to have their say about the marketing of the area. They also provided valuable insights into the profile of locals and visitors to the area. This session helped identify the issues that need to be addressed before marketing can begin.

Attendees included:

- ▶ Kent Mayo
- ▶ Kevin Abey
- ▶ Paul Hobbs
- ▶ Rhonda Brooks
- ▶ Ross Burnet
- ▶ Tom O'Connor
- ▶ Tony Hazelwood
- ▶ Alex Pawlow
- ▶ Bruce Howlett
- ▶ Jenny Sansom
- ▶ Terry Hayes
- ▶ David Robinson
- ▶

The group was given the background of Township Marketing plans and then asked a series of questions in relation to Uralla. Responses to questions and issues are as follows. **Please note that these are the opinions of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the consultant. In some instances information may be incorrect or subjective but is recorded to reflect the opinions or perceptions of the local business community.**

What is the profile of your local community?

- ▶ Historically, the locals have been wool producers
- ▶ There are a number of business owners in the community
- ▶ There was a sizeable welfare community but this is diminishing
- ▶ Educators and students
- ▶ People who work in Armidale
- ▶ The number of sea changers are increasing
- ▶ Retirees are increasingly 55 – 65 years old
- ▶ People moving to join their family
- ▶ Artists attracted by the creative environment

Where do new residents come from?

- ▶ People from Armidale who are looking for a change from the dramas of Armidale
- ▶ People from surrounding areas looking for cheaper rural blocks of land as a result of the building “boom”

- Uralla is seen as safe
- ▶ We seem to attract people from Newcastle
- ▶ We've seen an increase in people staying for a week or more to check out the area as a possible home
 - Some are Sydney business owners looking for a change of lifestyle and business opportunities

What attracts residents to Uralla?

- ▶ It's a "pretty" town
- ▶ Can walk around easily
- ▶ Safe environment
- ▶ Sense of community
- ▶ Historic charm
- ▶ Climate
- ▶ No water restrictions
- ▶ Broadband is available
- ▶ Australia's best wool growing area
- ▶ Safe, friendly town
- ▶ Surroundings and National Parks
- ▶ Artistic community
- ▶ Residents who are passionate about the town

Who makes up the visitor market?

- ▶ Grey Nomads
- ▶ Wanderers – tend to be self funded retirees
- ▶ Families passing through during school holiday periods
- ▶ People breaking their journey between Sydney and Brisbane
- ▶ Tend to be overnight stays only
- ▶ People visiting friends and relatives
- ▶ Sales representatives and workers e.g. Telstra use Uralla as central point
- ▶ Bikers touring New England – especially weekends
- ▶ People attending local events e.g. Uralla Book Festival, Agility Dog Trials
- ▶ Spill over for accommodation for Armidale e.g. school formals and Tamworth for the Country Music Festival
- ▶ Weekend day-trippers from Armidale and Tamworth
- ▶ The volume of visitors has increased over the past 4-5 years

What is the retail mix & skills of Uralla?

- ▶ 7 day trading with 12.30pm close on Sunday
- ▶ Cafés & Galleries and some other browsing shops are open on the weekend
- ▶ Some antique shops are open a bit randomly
- ▶ Customer service is outstanding
- ▶ Retail skills are improving

What are the gaps in the business mix from a resident's perspective?

- ▶ Longer retail trading hours
 - Currently it is more convenient for workers to shop in Armidale
- ▶ Fabric shop

- ▶ Banks
- ▶ Better coffee, (it has been improving though)
- ▶ Higher end food offering
- ▶ Midrange restaurant which is open at night
- ▶ Fish shop
- ▶ Combination café/browsing shops
- ▶ Furniture/whitegoods store
- ▶ Computer store
- ▶ Art Gallery

What are the gaps in the business mix from a visitor's perspective?

- ▶ Businesses shut on some days. For instance nothing open on a Monday
- ▶ After hours meals
- ▶ Breakfast
- ▶ Food for travellers

What are the challenges of the market?

- ▶ Main street parking
- ▶ Caravan parking
- ▶ Stopping more through traffic
 - Average 4,500 passing vehicles per day
 - Average spend is \$45 per visitor
- ▶ No business group
 - Getting the business owners talking and working together
- ▶ Maintaining the loyalty of the local community

What are the opportunities?

- ▶ Increasing the average spend of visitors
- ▶ More street scaping
- ▶ Development of Pioneer Park
- ▶ Memorial Tree Planting
- ▶ More public art/mosaics, murals and pavement art
- ▶ Undergrounding of power in the main street
- ▶ Beautify town entrances
- ▶ Promotion of facilities and attractions at local service stations

What are the branding/image issues?

- ▶ Thunderbolt is the image, but not liked by all locals
- ▶ No consistency of logo or colour
- ▶ Strong historic presence – walks/museum
- ▶ Quaint New England feel
 - It's our own Bally Kissangel
- ▶ Potential to promote
 - Availability of broadband
 - Australia's best wool growing area
 - Safe, friendly town
 - The "Glebe" of New England

How do you see the TMP project being implemented?

- ▶ Communication is required
- ▶ Economic Development Board
- ▶ Needs consistent momentum

Phase One – Consolidation

Overview

Uralla is a town that is facing a positive future. It already has an attractive streetscape, strong retail mix of browsing shops, the basic infrastructure and local enthusiasm to capitalise on population increases and a growing day-tripper and visitor market.

It also has the advantage of a dedicated EDO (whose time is however focussed more on the NESCAP initiative) and a number of committed and enthusiastic business owners.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the population of Uralla is undergoing a change. There is a growing interest in local real estate and it is likely these population changes are driven by several factors:

- ▶ The proximity to Armidale and employment opportunities
- ▶ The growing artistic community
- ▶ The relaxed pace of life and perception of a safe, friendly town
- ▶ A growing number of “sea changers” looking for an affordable rural lifestyle
- ▶ A growing number of baby boomer retirees looking for quality of life
- ▶ Affordable local real estate when prices are compared to other areas.

There is also evidence that suggests a developing day-tripper market. Several businesses in Uralla are already well-established destinations drawing customers from some distance for their specialised merchandise. Local business owners are reporting a growing number of visitors from surrounding areas and travellers stopping off in Uralla for a meal break or leg stretch. The fact that the average visitor spend is \$45 indicates that Uralla is already much more than an “ice-cream and a drink” town. It is likely this interest is being fuelled by:

- ▶ Growing interest in “Drive” tourism
- ▶ A visible sense of history in the main street architecture, streetscape and statuary
- ▶ The association with the Thunderbolt legend
- ▶ The close proximity of tourist attractions such as McCrossin’s Mill to the centre of town
- ▶ The mix of interesting independent retail shops as opposed to “chain” retailers
- ▶ The “charm” of Uralla main street compared to larger centres such as Armidale.

These factors mean that Uralla is a community facing change. The business community in particular needs to decide whether it wants to capitalise on these opportunities.

New residents will continue to move into the area and the mix of new versus established retiree populations will change significantly. Although many of these new residents may be 50 plus they will have very different attitudes and attributes, needs and wants to the existing senior citizen market. Younger families relocating from major cities will also have specific needs and wants that may differ from existing residents.

To meet the needs and wants of new residents, businesses will need to review their product ranges and introduce new products or upgrade existing product

ranges. For instance, carry more gourmet lines, products for young children, stock “up market” skin care or cosmetic brands. Businesses may also have to change their customer service or adapt their trading hours.

It is likely that Uralla businesses will see revenue growth from three main areas:

- ▶ Increased average spend from the local community
- ▶ Increased visits by residents from surrounding areas
- ▶ Increased number of travellers/tourists spending longer in the town.

Prior to actively promoting Uralla to these target markets, there are several areas that will need to be improved, upgraded or consolidated. This “consolidation phase” usually takes several months and, if possible, should be scheduled during quieter months for the business and tourism community. Most of the recommendations for Uralla are not major, so the community should be able to commence active marketing towards the middle of 2005.

Local Community

Retail Mix

The day-to-day needs of local residents are serviced by a number of locally owned businesses including a Foodworks Fresh supermarket, 2 bakers, 2 butchers, pharmacy, newsagency, hair salons, furniture and bedding retailer, small electrical appliance outlet, fashion outlet, hardware shop and a sports and toy store. Uralla also has a Post Office, National Bank and New England Credit Union. Although most day-to-day needs are covered, local residents do not necessarily have a wide range of choice. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many residents travel to Armidale for their weekly or fortnightly shopping and major purchases. Residents who are working in Armidale also tend to make purchases in the larger town. This is partly affected by Uralla trading hours which make it difficult for workers to shop locally although some service businesses such as the butchers open at 6 – 6.30am. From a local perspective there are several outlets and products that could be added to retail mix “wish list”.

- ▶ Better bakery product in terms of range
- ▶ Gourmet delicatessen items
- ▶ Fresh seafood – (although supplied by one local butcher and a mobile vendor)
- ▶ Mid range restaurant for evening dining
- ▶ Fabric retailer
- ▶ Computer outlet

Gaps such as better bakery product and gourmet delicatessen items are primarily opportunities for existing retailers. As the butcher stocks seafood and there is a mobile vendor visiting the town demand may not be sufficient to warrant another retailer carrying seafood. It is also likely that the planned expansion of the supermarket will address some of the gaps in the market and it may be possible for another outlet to add fabric to their mix. Individual owners should carefully research product demand with existing customers. This can be done informally by chatting to regulars or more formally with questionnaires or a “focus group” discussion with target customers. This facilitated group discussion could be promoted as an initiative of the local business community.

More networking and discussion amongst retailers will give better insights into the changing local market and some retailers may choose to test this market with ranges of higher priced product. This is not as risky a venture as it sounds as much of this product will also appeal to the tourist and day-tripper market.

New products should be tested for a minimum of three months. It should be noted that creative merchandising and display of higher priced or gourmet food products is critical and they should be grouped together rather than mixed in with standard fare. In-store promotion such as sampling will also help increase awareness of the new lines.

It is likely that escape spending will be a fact of life for the foreseeable future. To maintain local spending, retailers should not attempt to compete solely on price but promote quality, product knowledge and customer service. A shopping basket survey (see appendix) often demonstrates that local prices are not nearly as high as local customers have assumed. In some cases prices can be the same or even lower. Positive results of this research can be published in the local newsletter for maximum impact.

Local businesses can reduce the impact of escape spending by:

- ▶ Tailoring their opening and closing hours to meet the needs of commuters to Armidale. For instance, a butcher in similar community encourages local residents to fax or email their order and he has it ready for pick up when they return to town, this means closing 30 minutes later. Another community encourages residents with weekenders who travel to the town on Friday nights to email or fax their supermarket orders, which are left at one of the local pubs for collection
- ▶ Research products that customers would prefer to buy locally and tailor their ranges to suit. This is particularly important for fresh foods and perishables, which many people prefer to purchase locally
- ▶ Improve customer service so there is a loyalty which holds the shopper to the local area. It appears that the level of customer service in Uralla is already high but there may be opportunities for new initiatives such as wish list boards, loyalty cards or promotions
- ▶ Run a “shop local first” campaign to encourage locals to visit as many local businesses as possible
- ▶ Increased promotion of the benefits of shopping in Uralla with a monthly “Shopping Around” column in the local newsletter or 60 second spot on the radio that promotes new retailers, new services, staff changes or new stock. This could be presented by a local personality to give the material an editorial feel. The local newsletter or radio station may be willing to donate the time/space or this could be subsidised through business group membership fees or a marketing contribution.

It is also important to note that cafes and food outlets play an important role in building local loyalty. Good coffee, interesting food and pleasant environments lead to “word of mouth” referrals which encourage locals to eat in town or meet friends in town and then go shopping to support other retailers. Local retailers also respond well to informal bonuses like delivery of coffee during quiet times or being able to bring in their own mug for a fill up. Some cafes build local loyalty by targeting specific groups in the community; some examples include: Coffee club for young mums (or retirees) offering a coffee and cake special between 9.30am and 11am, Frequent Flyer bonuses for regulars e.g. buy five cups of coffee get one free or seniors specials and coffee club. Some cafes also promote take home meals such as lasagne or quiche and salad towards the end of the day for the local retail or business community or busy mums.

There are currently no retail vacancies in the main street, which is generally a sign of a thriving retail community. When vacancies occur, the Economic Development Specialist together with the business community may be able to recommend usage and work with local real estate agents to promote the opportunity in regional and Sydney press. It is also possible to actively source a business that is appropriate to the Uralla retail mix. For instance, approaching a

successful restaurant/cafe from another regional centre that may be interested in opening a second outlet.

Travellers and Tourists

Uralla is a natural stopping off point for travellers but is unlikely to become a holiday destination (except for people visiting friends and relatives) in the short to medium term due to the quantity and range of accommodation available. There are a number of B&B operators and a 3.5 star motel. There are also two budget motels, pub accommodation and two small caravan parks which are unlikely to appeal to the Wanderer market which is generally looking for large parks with significant facilities.

In the short to medium term, the aim for Uralla should be to increase the length of time visitors stay in the township and maximise the amount of money spent whilst in town.

There is a good range of tourism product in Uralla including museums, Thunderbolt Rock and gravesite, horse riding and scenic drives. The Uralla Visitor Information Centre appears to do an excellent job of promoting the local tourism product. It is also refreshing to see that the retailers in town are also regarded as tourism product and promoted in much of the tourism marketing material. There is also the opportunity to work more closely with the Armidale VIC to attract visitors who either stop off at Armidale first or who are staying in Armidale.

Retail Mix

The main street and the mix of retailers are a major drawcard. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of long distance travellers already have Uralla on their list of "must stop" places; no doubt there are many others who have travelled through the town promising that next time they will stop and explore.

The retail mix of browsing shops in Uralla main street is already very strong with an emphasis on antiques/bric a brac, books, craft and art. As there are no retail vacancies at present it is difficult to suggest additions to the mix. However, it is important that any new browsing outlets maintain the integrity and feel of the Uralla Township. Suggestions might include:

- ▶ Furniture or woodworker
- ▶ A nursery featuring heritage plants (as there are three nurseries in town but not in the CBD this may be an opportunity for an existing Uralla business)
- ▶ Outdoor enjoyment store
- ▶ Craft or artist collective
- ▶ Gifts and collectibles
- ▶ Ladies fashion – this stock should ideally be tailored towards the profile of the antique shoppers

It would also be ideal for the foundries to have an opportunity to display or retail small products in the main street or at the Visitor Information Centre. Other outlets may be interested in retailing smaller items produced by the foundry.

There may also be an opportunity to commission one of the foundries to produce a high quality Uralla gift item or souvenir, which can be retailed through the town. Developing the concept could be a project for the Creative Village Committee.

The retail mix of food outlets and food products is an area of opportunity for Uralla and is discussed under food outlets.

Parking

Parking is a controversial issue in almost every regional town. Concerns range from staff parking in prime areas to locals who complain that visitors are taking all the spots at weekends. In fact, many visitors do not mind a short walk to the shop and a full street often means the town is perceived as popular and worth stopping. Although there has been some concern amongst locals in Uralla about the streetscaping which has removed a few of the main street parking spaces the improvement in appearance outweighs the loss of spaces. Improved signage directing visitors to the parking behind the retail area may reduce the strain on main street parking in peak times.

Driver Reviver

Driver Reviver stops are a wonderful community service and a valuable asset to any community. The Driver Reviver site at Uralla is located away from the main street on a small block. This location does not give drivers easy access to the excellent range of retail outlets in the main street. It is likely that drivers stopping at the Driver Reviver site will spend their time at the site and not explore Uralla further. The Driver Reviver site is promoted with a banner on the Southern approach to town and signage on the Northern approach. There is some concern amongst business owners that the promotion of free coffee is encouraging travellers not to stop in the Uralla main street. Moving the Driver Reviver site closer to town will encourage visitors to stay longer and spend money in the town. I am not sure of the rules and regulations of running a Driver Reviver stop but is it possible to...

- ▶ Relocate the site closer to town e.g. Apex Park/Pioneer (which is a much more pleasant environment) so that visitors can stretch their legs with a stroll around the shops or a visit to the museum
 - Visitors to the site can be handed their free biscuit or Kit Kat along with a leaflet promoting cafes, milk bars and coffee shops in the main street
 - Provide free instant coffee at the site and hand out vouchers for discount espresso coffees (e.g. latte or cappuccino) at local cafes and coffee shops
- ▶ Turn the whole main street into a Driver Reviver stop by providing free instant coffee to participating coffee shops who can also offer discount espresso or plunger coffee
- ▶ Brand the Driver Reviver stop so it's promotes the township e.g. Heritage Driver Reviver.

Cross Promotion

For tourists and business travellers who are staying in the area there are opportunities to increase the cross-promotion between tourism and retail businesses. It is a fact that many tourists (and business travellers) like to shop when they are away. There are several ways cross-promotion can be enhanced:

- ▶ Encourage motel owners, B & B operators and caravan parks to carry a local business directory or more promotional material on local businesses
- ▶ Upgrade existing compendiums in motels, B&B's and caravan parks to include more specific information e.g. a shopping guide, menus and **opening hours of all food and liquor outlets**
 - The suggested 1, 2, or 3 days in Uralla leaflets could also be included in the compendiums
 - Some communities produce standard compendiums that are provided to local accommodation providers. These are usually

funded through advertising. It should be noted that accommodation providers with their own restaurants would need to make their own menus prominent in the compendium.

- ▶ Increase the amount of information on retail businesses displayed at the Visitor Information Centre.
- ▶ Conduct retail “famils” of Uralla main street for all local accommodation providers and tourism outlet staff. Famils are familiarisation visits which give local business owners a chance to host local accommodation providers. This may be organised as an initiative of the Visitor Information Centre. A group of tourism operators would be taken on a tour of the browsing shops with each business owner explaining about their stock and target markets. Operators are also given a tour of all cafes, pubs and food outlets so they have a good idea of what they are recommending to their guests. If a group famil is not possible this may also be an initiative for individual retailers
 - These famils could also be extended to cover Armidale, Walcha and Guyra operators and to a lesser extent Tamworth and Inverell operators.

Opening Hours

One of the key issues for the growing tourist market will be inconsistency of trading days, particularly amongst café’s and browsing outlets. It is disappointing for tourists to arrive in a town on a weekday and find there is nowhere to eat or only some of the browsing outlets are open. However, it must be recognised that it is a challenge to trade seven days in a small community and maintaining a profitable business is of primary concern. It is likely that as the popularity of Uralla grows, most browsing shops and food outlets will be able to sustain seven day trading and business owners will be able to employ local staff so they don’t have to be on duty seven days a week.

In the short to medium term, the retail community should try and work together to standardise opening days and hours. For instance in some communities tourist based businesses close on Mondays, in others there is a roster or agreed timetable for food outlets so that there is always somewhere open. These hours can be promoted on the Uralla website, at accommodation outlets and through the VIC. In some towns there are summer and winter hours e.g. a beachside town may trade 6 days in winter and 7 days in peak times.

Once opening hours or days have been decided for each business they can be published in a one colour or inexpensive flyer which can be promoted in local press or letterbox dropped to local postcodes including Armidale, Guyra, Walcha, Inverell and Tamworth

It is important that these outlets are promoted as an integral part of Uralla’s marketing as they will form an incentive for travellers to stop in town.

Day-trippers

This growing market should not be ignored as locals from Armidale, Tamworth, Guyra, Walcha, Inverell and surrounding areas come to soak up some of the charm of Uralla. The Uralla retail mix is particularly appealing to this market as it offers a range of products very different to larger centres.

This market usually travels in pairs or groups and is often attracted by good coffee and interesting café selections.

Frequent shopper programs such as coffee club cards which encourage visitors to visit the same outlet when they are in town can be effective with this market. The traditional rewards are value based such as buy five cups of coffee and get

the sixth free but this promotion can be adapted to suit value-add promotions such as a discount on a subsequent purchase or a free donut with purchase.

The Baker's Delight Shop in Armidale promotes purchases by offering a percentage of sales to local schools.

It may be possible for Uralla cafes to provide parents of Armidale and Uralla sporting teams with a discount coffee card when the team plays their sport in Uralla on a Saturday.

Some of the browsing shops that are destination outlets may want to work together to cross promote to their customer lists with simple flyers or email campaigns promoting a range of outlets or events such as the Book Festival.

General

Image and Visibility

There does not appear to be a logo that is used consistently for all signage and promotion of Uralla. Most tourism information carries the Thunderbolt logo in a circle with either a Thunderbolt Country or the Meeting Place positioning statement. There is also a distinctive font, which is used on some tourism marketing material including uralla.com. The Uralla Shire Council also has a circular logo featuring sheep, cattle, fruit and a building.

Uralla would benefit from a town logo and positioning statement that can be used on all marketing material. (This may be the same as the tourism logo). I understand that there is some divided opinion in the town re the Thunderbolt logo but it is important that the town branding give an indication of what to expect when you visit the town. It is also important that local businesses and community in general have ownership of the town logo so it should be generated locally. The logo and brand could be developed as a part of the Creative Village Committee or as a project for the Main Street Small Towns Group or Uralla Shire Development Board (USDB).

There is also potential to create specific town colours, which can be used on all signage and marketing material. Currently yellow and green are featured on the town entrance signs and main street flags but the colours vary and are not necessarily used in a heritage way.

- ▶ This branding could be included on:
 - Town entrance signs
 - Marketing material
 - Directional signs
 - Street banners
 - Website
 - Displays in the Visitor Information Centre
 - Individual retail outlets – e.g. window strips.
- ▶ Additional flags would be a relatively inexpensive way of strengthening the image and branding of Uralla. These “standards” could be attached to existing poles in the main streets. A series of flags could be used to promote all aspects of the town. Themes could include:
 - Festivals
 - Industry – Foundries, Lockheed Martin etc
 - Primary produce
 - Museums
 - Retail mix e.g. antiques & bric a brac
 - Uralla logo and positioning statement

- Seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter)
- ▶ These flags could supplement the existing event flags
- ▶ Mini versions of the flags could be made available for local businesses that wanted to show their support for the area. (These look something like the Lotto flags outside newsagencies)
- ▶ Window strips that tie in to the new branding would also create strong visibility at shop level. Window strips run at the top and bottom of shop windows and create a “frame” for merchandise. These could be developed as a part of a retail promotion or provided at cost to interested retailers. (Cadbury use these to promote their range of ice creams)

Signage

There is potential to develop distinctive gateway signs for Uralla. The existing signs are dominated by the large speed limit signs and give no indication of the attractive township ahead. This would be an ideal opportunity to utilise the skills of the local foundries and artist community to create a sense of “arrival” in Uralla.

There is also an opportunity to improve parking signage for caravans and upgrade signage at Thunderbolt’s Rock.

In many towns it is difficult to see the range of retail outlets as you drive by. This is not the case in Uralla. Shop and awning signage is generally sympathetic to the area, clean and easy to read. (There are a couple of awnings that are faded and hard to see). The use of umbrellas and outdoor seating give an immediate indication that this is a town focused on the visitor. Local retailers make excellent use of A Boards and are generally responsible about their placement on the pavement. Uralla businesses owners really excel with the quirky nature of their pavement displays. This should be encouraged (within guidelines) so it can become a feature of the streetscape.

There were also several excellent examples of creative A Boards but most were simply used to describe products and there were not a lot of “benefits” messages to give passers by an idea of why they should visit that outlet.

Food Outlets

Although there is a good selection of food outlets and takeaway food is available until 9pm most evenings, it is likely that there will be demand for more innovative food offerings from the changing traveller and local markets in the short to medium term. This is evidenced by the changing profile of travellers and the age of the town population.

Some of the products/services likely to increase in demand include:

- ▶ Well-made espresso coffee
 - Most coffee suppliers will provide free or low cost barista workshops which train operators and their staff to produce consistently high standards of coffee
 - There is also an opportunity for coffee shop operators to undertake Barista training with the New England Institute of TAFE or other trainer and those operators who successfully undertake the course are eligible to display a sign showing potential patrons that they have formal barista training
- ▶ Gourmet sandwiches featuring gourmet breads. This is an opportunity for a local baker to provide “café only” breads to the local cafés so they can create interesting dishes
- ▶ Healthy takeaway such as salads, wraps, yoghurts, fruit smoothies

- ▶ Picnic packs or pre prepared takeaways for the traveller market that may want to have a picnic in the park or eat on the road. These packs will increase revenue for takeaway outlets and allow for fast service
- ▶ There is an opportunity to provide breakfast food for tourists, travellers and locals. As this is not likely to be a huge market it would be best suited to an outlet that is already open such as the baker or takeaway. Product lines could include:
 - Fruit buns
 - Quiches
 - Toasted buns
 - Croissants
 - Bacon and egg rolls
- ▶ As visitor traffic increases there will also be opportunities for a gourmet range of ice-cream cones during summer. Ideally this could be a product for an existing café or takeaway
- ▶ Local retailers can also develop products specifically for the tourist market e.g.
 - Barbeque and salad packs (a joint project between the butcher and fruit and vegetable supplier or a supermarket product)
 - A range of fresh salads e.g. chicken salads is an ideal product for an outlet already producing barbeque chicken. These can range from Chicken & Avocado to Asian chicken, Chicken Caesar etc.
 - Fruit salads and yoghurt
 - Takeaway soups in Winter
 - Picnic packs including cold meats, salads and drinks
 - Easy meals for the caravan market
 - Kids meals.
- ▶ There is an opportunity to increase promotion of local produce in the fresh food and food service businesses. Local cafés could feature recipes with local lamb or beef and also retail product from local suppliers. Local bakers could also supply specialty pies for the café market eg local lamb and beef. The Thunderbolt Pie previously produced by the Uralla Bakery was a good example of this.
- ▶ The food and beverage operators would benefit from a town visit from a consultant who can assist them with:
 - Developing profitable menus
 - Consistently producing quality product
 - Creating a distinct positioning for each outlet through menus and pricing
 - Food presentation
 - Skills to help kitchen and wait staff cope with increased volume
- ▶ This consultant may be sourced from Sydney or a regional centre where there are several excellent restaurants whose chefs may be willing to carry out this work.
- ▶ The food consultant visit could be the focus to generate a meeting of local operators. Although it is a challenge, it would be ideal to get the food and beverage suppliers together to discuss key issues such as:
 - Consistent opening hours
 - Menu ranges
 - Opportunities from any gaps in the market

- ▶ If this is not feasible it may be possible for the Economic Development Specialist to deal with each operator separately and facilitate some of the recommended changes.

Window Displays

Window displays and store signage are vital to convince visitors to stop and spend time. As they drive through town, A Boards, store signage, bright stock displays in the front of store and window displays will convince them to stop and spend time in Uralla.

- ▶ At an individual shop level, improved window displays would enhance the image of the area and increase revenue for individual businesses.
- ▶ I would recommend a practical seminar for local retailers with additional in-store advice for interested outlets. This seminar could be followed with a window display competition which will provide some fun and allow participants to show off their newly learned skills. Additional mileage would be gained from running a children's competition where children gather clues to a puzzle from the window displays
 - It may also be possible to involve local Tafe or uni students studying design or retailing to practise their skills with a project in Uralla. This gives local retailers some inspiration and identifies potential visual merchandisers for ongoing projects.
- ▶ Another area which could be improved is in-store signage and display. In some outlets stock was not laid out logically and there was a lack of directional signage. This is a topic which could also be addressed in a display and merchandising seminar.

Amenities

- ▶ Although not covered as a part of this consultancy, it is important that the local council review public amenities such as toilets.

Marketing Material

To maximise the impact of visitor information there should be consistent use of logos, positioning statements, paper quality, paper size, fonts and type styles. This can be achieved with a simple template that would be used for all marketing documents.

There is also potential to promote the image of Uralla main street on all marketing material.

The uralla.com website is a key marketing tool for the town. Web search is an important resource for anyone planning a trip to the area.

The uralla.com site includes excellent information but is currently not appearing first on some searches. This may be due to the .com address. The site may benefit from a Search Engine Optimisation project to improve rankings on key search engines. I understand the website is still in development phase but there are several improvements which will enhance the marketing appeal of the site:

- ▶ Inclusion of festivals on the site
- ▶ Inclusion of more retail outlets
- ▶ More benefits based information on retail outlets
- ▶ Inclusion of one or two menu items on café and restaurant entries
- ▶ More visual representation of the main street on main menus

It is already being effectively used to communicate with business owners and keep them up to date with initiatives.

There is a strong range of marketing material distributed by the Visitor Information Centre. There may be potential to consolidate some of this material and update the DL colour brochure. Any new logo and branding should be included on all material as it is printed or republished and the web address should be heavily promoted on all marketing material

- ▶ Printed publications should be placed in all accommodation outlets on a regular basis
- ▶ There is also potential to produce leaflets specifically designed to increase the length of stay in Uralla. An easy concept to develop would be guides for "One Day in Uralla", "Two Days in Uralla" and/or "Three Days in Uralla". These brochures should combine both tourism and retail businesses. Using this format it is easy to include a range of activities for example:
 - Breakfast in a cafe
 - Browsing through antique shops
 - Lunch in a café
 - Visit to Foundry
 - Horse riding
 - Visit to Hasset's Military Museum
 - Scenic drive
 - Town Heritage walk
 - Picnic in the park
- ▶ A specific leaflet for the day-tripper market could also be produced detailing several options e.g. antique shoppers heaven, coffee cake and a chat, escape the rat race, history, heritage and great food
- ▶ Another set of "day in" leaflets could be produced for the local VFR (visiting friends and relatives) market. These have the added advantage of building local pride and reminding locals of attractions in the area. These would be similar to the tourist leaflets but relevant to locals e.g. The grandkids come to stay, School holiday fun in your own backyard, Entertaining the rellies.
- ▶ The local business community should also look at creating an "information pack" for motel room compendiums. This pack could include:
 - Promotion of all the eating options including opening hours of businesses
 - Promotion of individual outlets
 - A business directory.
- ▶ This information can also be made available at the Visitor Information Centre.
- ▶ Individual businesses should be encouraged to have their opening hours clearly visible. This is particularly relevant for food outlets.
- ▶ A definitive business directory should be produced for both the local and visitor market. The directory should include:
 - Basic details about each business such as services provided, contact details and opening hours
 - Tourism accommodation and attractions
 - Information re any visiting solicitors and health specialists if applicable.
- ▶ The Directory should be updated every three to six months and could be distributed through:
 - The Visitor Information Centre
 - Accommodation outlets
 - Local businesses

- Local real estate agents (for new residents)
- It could also be included on the council or tourism website.

Suggested Training

Skills development seminars and one on one consulting are the most effective way of improving retail skills such as merchandising and display. It can be a good idea to combine skills development with an event such as annual Business Awards. Seminars should be held three or four months before the awards are judged. Mystery shopping can then be conducted prior to the judging process and scores for customer service and merchandising can be included in the award judging.

- ▶ Destination outlets may benefit from a workshop on E Marketing or chance to work with a consultant with expertise in on line sales and marketing
- ▶ Up and coming outlets may need support developing websites. This may be facilitated through the Uralla CTC or other businesses through the CTC.
- ▶ Although customer service in Uralla is of a high standard younger and newer staff always benefit from customer service training
- ▶ Food and beverage outlets would benefit from Barista and food presentation training
- ▶ Some businesses would benefit from business advice to help them analyse and improve their financial performance
- ▶ The New England-North West Business Advisory Service may be able to assist with some training services
- ▶ Local retail staff would also benefit from training that will help them direct tourists to what they need. The training could be addressed as a part of a customer service program or in conjunction with the launch of the business directory. This could be supported with a simple flyer that details the most common requests for example:
 - Camera film
 - Camera batteries
 - Historic buildings
- Local tourism operators could also get together to host an event for retail staff to brief them on tourist activities in the town. This could be hosted by the Visitor Information Centre.
- ▶ There are also opportunities to tap into business services offered by the Armidale Business Advisory Service. Manager of the centre, David Henderson is keen to support the town with training, individual consulting and business advice.

Implementation

It is obvious that many members of the Uralla business community are ready to embrace change and adopt initiatives suggested in the plan. However, as most already have extensive business, family and community commitments they are unlikely to be able to find the time to manage the implementation phase.

In my experience, communities that rely on volunteers for implementation do not generally achieve results as quickly as communities that have a dedicated coordinator.

Uralla is fortunate to have an economic development specialist through the council and I would envisage that the overall monitoring of the plan would be their responsibility. However, given the officers existing workload it would be ideal to have a part time coordinator who can handle the "nuts and bolts" of implementation. Part funding for this position may be available from DSRD.

It would also be advisable to develop an informal committee of interested business owners who can have input into prioritising initiatives and act as a point of contact for the coordinator.

Business Network Development

As there are a number of motivated business and tourism operators in Uralla there is an opportunity to bring the business community together on a regular basis to network, socialise and share information. This will be especially valuable for business operators who are new to town and keen to learn more about the area.

At this stage I would recommend an informal social group rather than a Chamber of Commerce or formal structure. It may be possible to build on the Business Breakfast Initiative sponsored by the New England Credit Union (NECU). An ideal format is "Business after Five" or "Business before seven" where a different business hosts an informal after work or breakfast meeting at their premises every month. This has the added benefit of giving business owners a chance to find out more about some of the products and services offered in the town.

This informal network will also be able to monitor and contribute to the implementation of the Township Marketing Plan.

These meetings could be coordinated by the Economic Development Specialist or appointed coordinator.

As the website is already established as a communication tool for the business community it would make sense to build on this and post information and newsletters on the site.

Once the group is established it will be easier to introduce skills development sessions. These could be short sessions replacing some of the networking or dedicated evening or breakfast meetings. This may depend on whether the presenters are local or travelling to Uralla for the workshop.

Phase Two – Marketing

Once the majority of the consolidation issues have been addressed it is time to actively market the area.

Local Market

The introduction of new products and services will be an important factor in maintaining business from the local community. However, the power of customer service should not be underestimated. Ongoing customer service training and retail skills development should be an ongoing part of marketing to the Uralla community.

Marketing initiatives for the local community could include:

Interesting Information

- ▶ Publication of the shopping basket survey in the local newsletter.
- ▶ Regular “Shopping Around” column in local newsletter.
- ▶ “Shopping Around” segments on the local radio station.
- ▶ Distribution of Day in Uralla leaflets via Council newsletter or with rate notices.

Postcards

- ▶ The local community can help promote Uralla with a postcard campaign to friends and relatives living out of the area. A postcard depicting Uralla can be distributed to local residents via local businesses or as a part of an existing mail out such as rate notices.
- ▶ Postcards can also be placed in motel room compendiums, sold at the Visitor Information Centre or distributed through local tourist attractions.
- ▶ The cost of printing can be subsidised by the local businesses community but in many cases local printers are often willing to donate the cost of printing in return for a line on the card or a logo promoting their business.
- ▶ An additional run of cards left blank can be made available for businesses to use for their own marketing.

Shop Local Campaign

Uralla needs to keep locals spending as much as possible in town. To be realistic, locals will continue to purchase some of their major items at larger centres such as Armidale, but a “Shop Local First” campaign can be an effective way of maximising revenue from locals. Typically shop local campaigns should run one or two times a year during peak or shoulder retail times e.g. Christmas or prior to major festivals. To keep these promotions fresh you can look at different styles of promotion; these include:

Shop Local First

This simple concept runs three times a year. For every \$5 customers spend they receive a ticket for a prize draw. The prize can be tailored to suit the needs of the community but can range from a donated holiday to cash prizes, which would typically be first prize \$500 - \$1,000 and second prize \$200 - \$500. At peak times like Christmas a large number of smaller cash prizes can be offered. Although effective, this promotion has a major disadvantage in that there is no guarantee the winnings will be spent in town.

Shopper Dollars Concept

Over a period of 3 - 4 months every purchase in Uralla earns Shopper Dollars. Typically you would earn 10% or \$1 for every \$10 you spend.

These dollars can then be used to bid at an auction for goods and services provided by local businesses. These auction goods should include one major prize, which will provide the incentive to attend the auction. A local auctioneer or celebrity can be invited to run the auction.

- ▶ This promotion should be an ongoing campaign run twice a year.
- ▶ Timing should be tied in with optimum trading times.
- ▶ Promotion of the event can include:
 - Advertising in local newsletters, press and radio
 - Window banners in each retail outlet
 - Street banners
 - Window display competition.
- ▶ To maximise the impact of the promotion you can consider a community service angle where a percentage of the dollars raised go towards funding a program that will help a local group.
- ▶ The auction can be the central focus of an existing festival or tie in with a Christmas Light display.

Uralla Promotion Material

To tie in with the historic appeal of Uralla; the shopper dollar concept could be adapted by producing Uralla promotional "currency". Tokens could be designed by the local arts community, produced by the foundry and used as gift vouchers for local businesses or distributed through the VIC and tourist outlets for the traveller market. From initial research it appears that there could be restrictions if these coins are used as "legal tender". However, it may be possible to produce them as tokens or souvenirs. This will need to be investigated further.

Frequent Flyer Concept

The town can also encourage individual retailers to run their own Frequent Shopper promotions by supplying a Uralla Frequent Shopper Card and poster, which can be overprinted for each business. This will allow individual retailers to participate in their own way while giving a Uralla identity to the promotion.

Tourist Market

This market relies heavily on word of mouth so a good experience will be the best form of marketing. It would appear that the local Visitor Information Centre is effectively targeting the wider market.

- ▶ Visitor Information Centres within a one-day drive of Uralla could be targeted with information packs on Uralla and asked to include information on Uralla in their centres. Ideally these should be presented in person but it may be difficult to find someone to undertake this task. Tourism operators may also want to include their material in the pack and may be willing to present these packs personally.
- ▶ A creative way of increasing the number of visits to town by tourists is to run joint target mail campaigns with tourism businesses in the area that may have a mailing list. These would include:
 - Motels and B & B's
 - Museums
 - Retailers

- These business owners may be willing to look at sharing costs for a joint mail out to promote their own businesses and Uralla in general to the tourist market. Ideally this type of mail out would also promote a special reason for visiting such as Uralla Book Festival. This mail out could also include one of the “Days in Uralla” leaflets or an updated copy of the Uralla brochure.
- ▶ There is potential to further develop the Uralla Book Festival into a key event for marketing Uralla. It is unique to the town, fits the town image and is locally owned so is unlikely to be moved to another destination.
- ▶ With Council and town support this Festival may also be eligible for coordinator funding through the Department of State & Regional Development.

Day Visitors

- ▶ Uralla brochures or “day in” guides can be letterbox dropped to surrounding areas such as Tamworth, Inverell, Guyra, Walcha and Armidale. The aim of this marketing is to cross-promote attractions and shopping options that will keep the visitors in town longer.
- ▶ These communities should also be targeted with mail outs promoting:
 - Festivals and special events
 - Extended opening hours.
- ▶ A PR campaign to press and radio in these areas could generate coverage for Uralla. If funds permit a “Shopping Around” column similar to the one placed in the Wordsworth could be run in local papers for each target area.

Visibility

Signage

Uralla would benefit from increased visibility in the media and in the target area. Dr Roger Epps recommended in his report (April 2004) that billboards would be an ideal vehicle to promote accommodation in Uralla. I agree, but would broaden the brief to promote the lunch or tea break stopover. Billboards similar to the size of the one on the approach to town would be an ideal vehicle to promote the town to travellers. Depending on funds these could be located on Thunderbolt Way and New England Highway 1 – 1.5 hours from Uralla. Ideally these would carry a very strong visual image of the main street of Uralla

Publicity

- ▶ In the medium term, as visitor numbers increase, aim to promote Uralla in NSW and Queensland publications. Distribute press releases/fun information packs to publications and programs that will be read and watched by the target traveller market. The town should aim to send at least 3 – 4 media releases per year to target publications and programs. Suggested targets include:
 - Sunday Telegraph Travel Guide
 - Sun Herald Travel Guide
 - Sydney Morning Herald Travel Section (Saturdays)
 - Daily Mirror Travel Section
 - Brisbane Courier Mail Travel Section
 - Postcards – Channel 9
 - Sydney Weekender – Channel 7
 - Getaway – Channel 9
 - As with any publicity the trick is to find an angle. This could be:

- An event that is unusual eg Uralla Book Festival, Agility Trials
 - A local achievement eg winning an award
 - Topical e.g. the drought, farmers diversifying
 - Interesting to city readers/viewers, Uralla in winter, a chance to snuggle up by a fire. (Obviously targeted at Queensland market)
- ▶ It is often a good strategy to try different angles for different publications to maximise your chance of a story
 - ▶ Press releases can also be sent to local press in your target areas. These, like all press releases should be followed up with a phone call.
 - ▶ It is also important to understand what the New England North West Regional Tourism Organisation is planning in the way of publicity and review the benefits of capitalising on existing strategies.

Business Awards

Business awards are a great way of recognising achievements and encouraging local businesses to improve their performance. For maximum impact the awards need to be seen as aspirational and motivational for participants. In many regional communities business awards are run by the local press and take the form of popular vote. Although these awards are very effective at involving the broader community they tend to lack credibility with the business community and would not be recommended for Uralla. However, a popular vote can certainly be included as a part of any business award.

There are two basic concepts that would work well for Uralla: The first is ideal for a predominantly retail business community and requires very little active effort from the businesses themselves. This means high participation levels.

Business Awards – Option One

- ▶ Businesses are nominated as finalists in set categories. Nominations are made by Council, an outside organisation such as the Armidale Business Advisory Service, an existing business group or a special committee convened specially for this event. To avoid problems of perceived bias, members of the committee can be nominated from outside the business community. They might include a member of local council or local business advisor e.g. accountant.
 - The committee would review all eligible businesses when making nominations. It is not unusual for a significant number of businesses to be nominated in this type of award.
- ▶ The categories can be tailored to suit the business mix in the community but might include:
 - Fashion
 - Jewellery and gifts
 - Hair and beauty
 - Takeaway Foods
 - Cafes and restaurants
 - Accommodation
 - Tourism
 - General services
 - Trade services
 - Furniture and Homewares
 - Leisure and entertainment.

- ▶ In addition to business categories there would also be major awards such as:
 - Business of the Year
 - Business operator of the Year
 - Employee of the Year.
- ▶ Once selected, finalists in each category are mystery shopped to test customer service, staff presentation and store presentation.
- ▶ The committee then culls the list to two or four potential winners in each category.
- ▶ These are then judged by a person from outside the area who would typically spend a day in Uralla reviewing businesses and interviewing finalists in Business Operator of the Year. This judge could be marketing or centre manager of a regional shopping centre, a business consultant, DSRD business development officer or lecturer in retail or small business from TAFE or the University of New England.
- ▶ Judging criteria could include:
 - Customer Service and staff presentation
 - Store presentation including window display and merchandising
 - Marketing activities including advertising, signage, image etc
 - Community involvement.
- ▶ Business Operator of the Year and Employee of the Year would be judged on the entry form submitted and a brief interview.
- ▶ These awards culminate in a dinner or special event where certificates or trophies are presented. Prizes can range from advertising space donated by local media to donated business products such as computer software and shopping vouchers for employee awards. In some communities prizes such as travel or gift packs are donated by the local business community or large companies in the area.

Business Awards - Option Two

- ▶ The second business award concept involves more participation from business owners and therefore tends to have a lower participation rate. However, it is more appropriate for a smaller community that has a broad range of businesses.
- ▶ Businesses are invited by the business group or Council to enter the awards and complete an award submission. Typically there would be less award categories which could be decided according the local business mix but might include:
 - Best business with less than 5 employees
 - Best business with 5 – 10 employees
 - Best business with 10 – 20 employees
 - Best service business
 - Best retail business
 - Best customer service
 - Most innovative business
 - Best tourism and accommodation business.
- ▶ In each category participants would be required to fill out a submission answering a range of questions. The questions will vary in each category but a typical entrant might be asked about:
 - Business history
 - Key success factors
 - Customer service initiatives

- Staff management
 - Plans for the future
 - Overcoming challenges
 - Use of technology in their business.
- ▶ These submissions are really mini business plans and completing them is usually a worthwhile process for participants. In some communities the Business Advisory Service or training organisation runs a workshop on filling in the entry form which gives business owners confidence in the process. For ease of judging, submissions should be less than ten pages.
 - ▶ Once submissions have been made they can be evaluated by a judge or judging panel. As some of the information in the entries would be confidential it is advisable to have someone from outside the area conduct the judging. The business development officer from DSRD, a business advisor or accountant, TAFE small business lecturer or similar could all act as judges.
 - ▶ Finalists in each category would be selected from the submissions and then briefly interviewed. Judging can be carried out in town or conducted by phone if necessary.
 - ▶ These awards culminate in a dinner or award ceremony. As there is quite a bit of time and commitment required by entrants, awards for this type of presentation need to be significant. Cash, grants, business equipment, business services or travel would all be desirable. It is usual for participants to pay for the awards dinner and many bring their staff along.

Appendix "A" – Resources

Coffee Products/Services

Most of the coffee manufacturers provide free training to their customers as part of their service. In Sydney this is provided by courses held at their training centres, but in regional areas the training is usually provided by the area distributors. These distributors are unwilling to train anyone other than their clients.

The two main companies are Vittoria and Lavazza. The contact details are:

Vittoria Coffee

SYDNEY HEAD OFFICE
118 Wetherill St Silverwater
NSW Australia 2128
Phone: 02 9748 0299 or

Lavazza

Lavazza have a Coffee & Training Centre in Surrey Hills (02 9281 6657)

Independent Training

In addition to the major manufacturers, there are two independent training schools based in Sydney. Both are prepared to put together a program to meet specific requirements and would be able to provide the training locally.

You also may find that existing coffee suppliers to Uralla may be able to help out with coffee training

Details are:

Barista College of Australia - Sydney

10 William Lane,
WOOLLOOMOOLOO, Sydney, NSW 2011
Tel: 02 9517 2255
Mob: 0414 870197

Contact: George Sabados
Email: georges@baristacollege.com.au
More details on their website www.baristacollege.com.au

The Gourmet Coffee Institute

Contact: Paul Jackson
Phone: 02 9938 4522
Mob: 0418 413 972

More details on their website www.coffeeinstitute.com.au

Visual Merchandising

It has been difficult to source independent consultants who specialise in merchandising and have an approach that is appropriate for small retailers in regional communities, i.e. be willing to take a hands-on approach and understand that retailers will not have large budgets.

The best seminar program on Visual Merchandising is run by the Australian Retailers Association (ARA).

The Australian Retailers Association was established in June 1996, combining the resources of:

- . The Retailers Council of Australia
- . The Retail Traders' Association of New South Wales
- . The Retail Traders' Association of Victoria
- . The Retail Traders' Association of South Australia
- . The Retailers Association of Queensland
- . The Tasmanian Chamber of Retailers

In addition to their seminars they have a consultancy division with the association and can provide a number of services including training in visual merchandising, retail selling skills and customer service.

Retail Traders occasionally hold a "retail road show" in regional areas.

For more details see their website www.ara.com.au

Contact Details

Bronwyn Toovey
Australian Retailers Association
20 York St Sydney 2000
Phone: 9290 3766

Food Consulting

Mary Atkins of Food Factotum is a renowned food marketing and retail specialist who has worked with major shopping centres such as Westfield, franchise operations and food retailers across Australia. She has a very practical and no nonsense approach which is well suited to the worries and concerns of small operators in regional centres. She is able to review retail outlets covering everything from hygiene to ambience, menus and signage. She can also look at the mix of food retail in an area and make suggestions for improving food service in an area. Mary is an experienced presenter and can run workshops of work one on one with individual businesses.

Contact details

Mary Atkins
Food Factotum
42 Palmgrove Road
Avalon NSW 2107
Phone: 99284011
Email: info@foodfactotum.com.au

Business Consulting

David Pallas of D&J Consulting is a business advisor who specialises in working with micro and small businesses to analyse their productivity and profitability. In a couple of hours he can effectively review the performance of a business and make practical recommendations re staffing, systems and financial management. David is also an experienced presenter and can run workshops in addition to work one on one with individual businesses.

Contact Details

David Pallas

D & J Consulting

99 Midgley Street

CORRIMAL NSW 2518

Phone (02) 4284 0511

Mob 0417 428 379

Email dpallas@speedlink.com.au

Website: www.becbiz.com.au