

November 2015

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT – The year in review

The Sunshine Coast started the year with an annualised average unemployment rate of around 7.4%, one point above the state average of 6.4%. It now looks like finishing the year with a declining annualised averages of 6.7% (September) and 6.4% (October), more in line with state averages of 6.5% and 6.4% respectively. (Source – ABS 12 month averages).

Many of the national economic commentators are forecasting that 2016 will be another tough year with slow economic growth and plenty of issues to deal with. SCC Mayor Jamieson appears to be quite buoyant about the state of the Coast and points to, among other things, a strengthening in some measures of the Sunshine Coast economy, confidence and even “spirit”. All are probably correct but SCBC believes that the region is in a better position now than a few years ago to cope with tough external conditions and to see more of the regional strategies start to contribute to job growth.

SCBC had a sound year and it has been great to see many of our members having a successful year also. We saw good results in the tourism, construction and retail industries. This was the year that Stockland turned the first soil in the Aura development, which has taken 11 years and \$40m in planning and is touted as one of the best examples on the Coast of good community engagement.

SCBC continued to take its message out to the broader community not only through media releases and opinion pieces, but through participating in other organisations’ initiatives that allowed us to reach different audiences. These initiatives included:

- Sleeping rough at the St Vinnies Community Sleepout
- Sponsoring the JobShow
- Sponsoring the awards night for the Generation Innovation.

We also adopted a new approach to addressing some of the issues that impact on the regional economy, community and our members. We introduced Think Tanks as a means of bringing many different groups together, including community leaders. It was successful and an initiative we will repeat in 2016.

What we achieved in 2015

Delivering on SCBC Economic Directions

Maroochydore Principal Activity Centre (PAC)

SCBC continued discussions with Mayor Jamieson in 2015 on two points: Sunshine Coast Council’s potential conflict of interest and how that was

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being managed, and the financial model for the development. SCBC welcomed the establishment of the **SunCentral** Maroochydore Pty Ltd to oversee the design and delivery of the new Maroochydore City Centre.

Status

SCBC looks forward to understanding further how the vision comes together and interacts with other commercial centres in the region. We look forward to meeting with the SunCentral Board in 2016 to discuss further its stated objectives.

Extension of Sunshine Coast Airport

SCBC showed its strong support for the expansion of the airport, particularly over the past few weeks, and has led an approach on behalf of SCBC members and others to meet with the Deputy Premier to advocate for the expansion of the airport. We look forward to meeting with the Deputy Premier shortly to reinforce the business community's support, and need, for the expansion to go ahead.

Status

SCBC will continue to support this project and to make the case for the expansion with state government and in the broader community.

Integrated Transport Plan

SCBC has pushed for the *Sunshine Coast Sustainable Transport Strategy 2011 -2031*, prepared when the Noosa area was part of the amalgamated Sunshine Coast Regional Council, to be endorsed by the Noosa Council. Further, SCBC has urged that state and federal governments provide bipartisan support for the high level direction of the plan and provide an appropriately detailed indication of the project's timeline and budget.

We understand why this is a difficult proposition - getting agreement and notional commitment from three tiers of government and two regional councils - however surely otherwise we do not have an actionable strategy.

Status

SCBC will continue to work with stakeholders to advocate federal and state governments for funding to be allocated to the upgrade of the Bruce Highway from Caboolture to the Sunshine Coast and for the duplicated rail.

Member Advocacy

SCBC was regularly involved with members advocating with Council and in the media supporting various developments that we believe had strategic value, by highlighting economic potential and loss if the developments didn't garner strong support, particularly from councillors.

Forums

SCBC was busy during 2015 hosting the following forums:

- ***The Challenges for Regional Australia in a Competitive Investment Market.*** Held June 2015. We attracted four excellent national speakers to this conference which received terrific reviews from the 150+ people who attended.
- ***Human Rights = Prosperity Symposium.*** Held November 2015. This symposium was another example of SCBC's willingness to step outside of mainstream conference topics to consider some of the human factors that influence the performance of our economy and the health and strength of our society.

Again we attracted excellent speakers for the three (3) separate events which made up the symposium including one of the Australia's most acknowledged liberal thinkers, The Hon Catherine Branson QC.

We received some of the highest praise we have ever received for this event which again reached new audiences, and also contributed strongly to our budget thanks in part to the generosity of our Patron Sponsor Tafe East Coast Queensland and event sponsors McCullough Robertson and RDA Sunshine Coast.

- **Think Tank Sessions – Protecting the Diversity and Richness of the Sunshine Coast Region Beyond Its Economic Value – Balancing Growth, Development and the Environment.** Held between March 2015 – August 2015.

This was an experiment that worked and is planned to be repeated in 2016. We conducted four x 4 hour sessions and challenged 20 people to 'think outside the box' to agree how we can improve the future outcome for the region by better balancing growth, development and environment. The agreed actions are available on the SCBC website.

Evidenced Based Research

SCBC did not initiate any new research in 2015. Rather, we focused our efforts on the implications of the results of the second Investment Market Survey released in November 2014.

We expect to undertake further research in 2016. Some of the topics under consideration are:

- Assessment of what the Sunshine Coast and Noosa Councils have achieved over the past 4 years and 1 year respectively.
- Review of where employment is picking up and what that means in terms of the broadening of the economic base.
- Assessment of the 'ripple effect' derived from the Kawana Health Precinct, outside of the Stockland investment, and whether the ripple effect is in line, better or worse, than that achieved for comparable international developments.
- The Sunshine Coast telling its community-driven story. This is intended as a community engagement exercise, with a difference, to culminate in a video diary on our website and a presentation to both mayors summarising the community's ideas and expectations about the region, organised into a high level strategic and aligned regional story.

A brief has been put to the market and an estimated budget of between \$75k - \$100k has been signalled. This project will require financial support from members, other organisations and the community in order for it to proceed.

What we want to focus on in 2016

SCBC's role remains as a business and economic advocate with our focus remaining on the economy, investment, infrastructure and employment. That gives us a lot of scope to make difference as we are the only apolitical regional business and industry group that works across all industries and is not beholden to a state based management group.

We will continue to improve in:

- Getting the runs on the board – being action orientated but evidenced based
- Involving our members in Think Tank sessions to shape the future

- Reaching out to interest groups, again through SCBC Think Tanks, seeking their involvement in shaping the future
- Tackling the tough questions.

We will undertake (subject to agreement at the strategy workshop in February 2016):

- at least one research project
- potentially two more series of Think Tank sessions with one planned to commence in January 2016
- at least two forums with one focussing on growing regional businesses.

SCBC will continue to participate in the regional REDS and will look to strengthening links with the SC Futures Board and SunCentral.

Summary

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following departing Board members for their contribution throughout 2015 and wish them the best for 2016:

- Mr Tim Boag for service and the work he has done during 2015 as UDIA's representative on the board.
- Mr Mark Skinner for his service over the past twelve months.

A big welcome to our new Board members:

- Mr Don Maconachie, representing University of the Sunshine Coast. USC was a founding member and has had Board representation previously through Prof. Mike Heffernan
- Mr Peter Bolton Hall. We welcome Peter back to the Board with this being his second stint as a board member. Peter was the PCA representative in his initial term.

Our success very much depends on our sponsors and members. We need our business members to encourage other businesses to add their weight to the voice of the Business Council. Successful advocacy only comes with the strength of the membership base and we need to keep building on this in 2016.

I would like to thank TAFE East Coast Queensland for their continued sponsorship as our Patron Sponsor in what has been a financially challenging year for them. I also thank those members and businesses who step in as event sponsors when asked. We have in-kind sponsors who we also want to thank: BDO for our audit work, Mach Technology who provide our web hosting, Telstra who provide our telecommunication and venue support and Fresh PR which has done an outstanding job on our media work this year.

Finally, I would like to thank you, our members, for your commitment to the Sunshine Coast and the Sunshine Coast Business Council; the Board for their time and efforts over the past 12 months and a big thank you to Kerrie Bryant-Adams and her family, Barrie and Matt, who have supported us throughout the year.

Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year.