

PRESENTATION
TO
THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

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The Role of Registered Clubs in enhancing Community Development within the City of Penrith

Preamble

Penrith nestles at the foot of the Blue Mountains approximately 55 kilometres from the Sydney CBD. It has one of the fastest growing metropolitan populations which presently stands at 175,000 people.

Penrith serves as a regional centre to the cities of Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains catering to a catchment in excess of 300,000 people.

Over the next 20 years, Penrith's population is expected to grow to approximately 210,000. Although Penrith has a diverse economy, local employment has not maintained parity with the rapid population growth such that only 61% of the local workforce could, if they desired, find local employment.

The hospitality, tourism and leisure industries are a substantial and growing economic sector of the City providing a much needed boost in local job opportunities.

Although Penrith's rapid population growth has brought many benefits to the City, the provision of infrastructure and services to meet the City's social, environmental and economic needs has not always kept pace with its growth.

Council's Corporate Strategy

Council has a vision for the City which essentially looks to achieve a vibrant urban community in a beautiful setting. Through effective leadership of the City, Council seeks to identify the aspirations of the community and the issues and challenges which are important to the City and address them. Council sees itself as the principal advocate of the City seeking benefits for the community.

Many of the issues that the City has to face are outside of Council's direct responsibility or capacity. This means that Council must select its programs with care doing things that most benefit the City and develop partnerships with and among the institutions, businesses and the community to deliver improved outcomes.

Registered Clubs within Penrith

There are approximately 30 registered clubs in Penrith. These clubs offer a diverse range of facilities and services from sporting and recreational pursuits such as golf and bowling clubs to clubs which have an entertainment/leisure focus.

Registered clubs are an important part of the history and culture of Penrith as they fulfil many of the community service obligations that Council or other service providers are unable to deliver.

Just about every sport imaginable is represented in Penrith. By and large Council's role is confined to the provision and maintenance of recreation facilities. The cost of organising the various sports, sponsorship, facilities for conducting meetings as well as contributions towards cost of expert coaching are in large measure derived from the donations from registered clubs.

A diverse range of leisure and cultural activities from indoor sports, dance, drama and choral performance are facilitated by our local clubs. Many of our service organisations and charities use the facilities of our local clubs, free of charge, for their meetings and other functions.

We are fortunate in Penrith to have many golf and bowling clubs which are still accessible to the local community. The cost of maintaining these facilities is such that they cannot be sustained alone by the participants in those sports. Licensed premises are therefore required to underwrite the cost of maintaining those assets.

The hospitality, tourism and leisure industries are a significant economic sector within Penrith and registered clubs are central to that business sector. Clubs are a major source of local employment. Penrith Panthers alone employs approximately 900 people.

Indeed, in new urban areas within the City, Council has promoted the potential benefits of establishing registered clubs to facilitate local community needs.

The Emu Plains Sporting and Recreation Club is a prime example of a community based club offering diverse leisure and entertainment opportunities while providing financial support for a range of sporting and recreation pursuits.

Community Service Obligations

In response to the NSW Government's Liquor and Registered Clubs Legislation Amendment (Community Partnership) Act 1998, Council and the six registered clubs within Penrith which are captured by that legislation have established a working partnership to administer the distribution of category 1 projects (categories include community welfare, community development, social services and employment assistance projects). The objectives of that partnership are:

- To realise a fair and accountable process for the allocation of funds
- That funds be allocated on the basis of identifying local community needs
- Avoidance of duplication of service provision
- Potential for a wide range of innovative projects to be funded
- To link local government social planning and access and equity processes

For its part, Council has taken on the responsibility for maintaining a central register of the category 1 applications received by clubs and has designed an application form to collect information for that purpose. Council has developed evaluation criteria and a common advertising strategy and is in the course of presenting social planning and other relevant data to club representatives.

As an example of the value to be derived from the funds distribution for category 1 projects, the table below was prepared by the Liquor Administration Board of NSW on the distribution of expenditure for category 1 projects for the period ended 30th November 1998.

Project Type	Proportion of Sample Total
Disadvantaged	13.9
Disabled	7.1
Aged Care	13.7
Counselling Services	2.7
Community Education	4.6
Community Health Services	31.4
Community Programs	8.3
Emergency Services	10.6
Specific Charities (Salvation Army/Red Cross)	2.7
Employment Assistance	5.0

It should be noted that approximately \$12 million was distributed as a consequence of that legislation during that twelve month period.

I would now like to talk about two examples of the benefit of clubs in the City of Penrith. Firstly, I will address the Penrith Panthers Club which is one of the largest clubs in Australia and I will then discuss the Penrith Gaels Club which is the newest club within the City.

Penrith Panthers

Panthers, which occupies a site of approximately 40 hectares, has a membership of around 50,000. As I indicated previously, Panthers employ approximately 900 staff with 25% of its net profit (approximately \$1.5 million) being distributed to category 1 and category 2 recipients. This compares to the Council which provides direct funding assistance on similar programs of approximately \$100,000. Being a service industry, Panthers has a high reliance upon labour. For every dollar in turnover, 25 cents is expended on labour to effect customer service requirements.

Panthers have extensive accommodation and conferencing facilities which attract substantial business to the City thereby contributing to the local economy. Extensive leisure and recreation facilities exist as part of the Panthers' complex including water sports comprising water skiing, water slides and other family entertainment, golf and leisure facilities, tennis and BMX facilities. Panthers recently secured approval for a major cinema complex including a cinemax screen as well as a wave pool, gymnasium and health and fitness centre.

Penrith Gaels Club

The newest and one of the smallest registered club in Penrith, with approximately 3,500 members, is that of the Penrith Gaels. This club, which emerged from a community-based committee, has been operational for approximately two years.

This year Penrith City Council and the Gaels have agreed upon joint funding over a three year period for a new sporting facility which will accommodate Little Athletics, Soccer and Gaelic Football. Lidcombe, which is approximately 30 kilometres east of Penrith, is the nearest Gaelic football facility.

The Gaels allow many sporting and community groups the free use of their facilities for meetings and seminars. They offer Irish language classes and Irish dancing classes and have recently established a new Cricket Club, new Soccer team and new Baseball team and is offering sponsorship for each of those groups.

Conclusion

If Penrith is to meet the social, environmental and economic needs of a large and vibrant urban community, we will rely upon registered clubs playing an active role in supporting community and recreation endeavours while also offering diverse leisure and entertainment facilities to satisfy expanding community needs. Our view is that registered clubs play a valuable role in the life of our City and Council's Strategic Plan places substantial emphasis on our partnership with those clubs.
