

9.3 Ballina Twilight Market

Attachment 1 - Twilight Market Operator's report



GENERAL

The successful trial period of the Ballina Twilight Market (BTM) started on the 29th December 2011. The site received compliments from stallholders and customers alike. It is close to town, providing a beautiful setting and has good access to parking, toilets and children's play area.

The continued wet weather through January: the average rainfall in January is 175mm, but we had 353mm in 2012 (statistics from BOM website), was our biggest challenge. This caused production problems for growers, which contributed directly to both a drop in the number of stalls at the BTM and indirectly to a drop in number of customers. Due to the BTM being an unproven concept, many Ballina Shire producers chose to stay with either the Byron Shire farmers markets or Missingham Bridge Sunday market. The limited number of growers in our area means there is intense competition from local Farmers Markets for quality producers.

The trial has shown that Ballina residents embrace the idea of a food focus market, with 70% of customers surveyed saying supporting local farmers was the primary reason they came to the BTM, this was followed by quality and freshness of product. The average spend at the BTM was less than \$50 with 65% spending \$25 or less, only 5% spent more than \$75. When surveyed 60% of visitors to the BTM thought Thursday was the best day for a market followed by Saturdays with 28%. When asked about the future of the BTM, 80% would shop at a Twilight Market all year around. There was very little support for a morning or daytime Farmer/food market.

**Surveys of customers are from a random selection of 100 customers over a 3 week period with an incentive of a raffle ticket in a BTM Hamper offered.*



Stunning twilight photo's from the BTM

Signage:

The bright banners put up at either end of River Street have attracted a lot of positive comments. More signs would be an improvement, making the BTM easier to find. A number of customers reported having trouble finding the BTM.

Recommendation: banners to be placed in Kerr Street, along with a set of signs saying MARKET with arrow directions at the roundabout on River Street.

Overflow to Town businesses

A number of local businesses became involved in the BTM, from giving out flyers, putting a poster up in a highly visible spot, coming along with an information stall and giving out vouchers. All business owners I spoke with were supportive of the concept and were helpful. Our survey recorded that 70% of BTM customers did visit other businesses in Ballina as a result of attending the market.

Advertising:

The BTM logo became easily recognizable and was a successful start in branding the BTM. The most effective form of advertising which got the most people to the market was word of mouth at 40%, followed by the Advocate newspaper 40% and Paradise FM 16%. Other forms of advertising banners and handouts attracted 10% each. The giving of good service to customers and offering choices has built a good relationship and strong recommendations.

**Vendor mix:**

In the planning stages there was a lot of interest from vendors with craft type stalls. This was not compatible with the character of the BTM. Feedback from customer's shows that more fresh produce was needed and also more restaurant style (eat there) stalls would improve the experience.

Recommendation: there is an opportunity to expand the BTM (in the Xmas holiday season) to include these types of stalls. The southern end of the Fawcett Park could be used and a variety of stalls including food could be accommodated.

This will give further opportunity to support buskers: a small market does not generate enough income to make attending worth their while, but they are a great benefit to the market making it more fun for customers. Fresh veggies and fruit are hard to find, but restaurant style stalls can be sourced from the community markets.

Vendors:

Stallholders came to the BTM to make extra income and to support the concept of a Ballina Twilight (Farmers) Market. Of the stallholders 75% are keen to come back to participate next year for the full daylight savings season.

The Market faces the challenge of seasonal variation of available products which will result in a number of stallholders (stone fruit, avocados etc) having short seasons.

Sustainability:

Summer brings with it an influx of visitors and longer days for families to be outdoors in the evening. There is however a higher likelihood of rain and storms, which affect supply and demand adversely.

For the BTM to be viable during the cooler months with shorter days, it would have to rely on its appeal to local residents. To try and achieve this would require further advertising and promotion which due to cost would be unviable given the BTM's current financial returns. Added to this is the concern over the lack of lighting at the site which has reduced trading (by March it is too dark at 8pm with stallholders packing up by 7.30pm and last customers have left by then).

The target of 30 stalls was hard to sustain due to the poor weather, lack of stock and not enough customers to warrant participation being the main reasons for this.

Recommendation

- o Look to restart the BTM in the October school holidays and operate through until the end of the daylight savings months in 2013.
- o Begin calling of expressions of interest from producers/processors in August, followed by craft type stallholders in October.
- o With our current street banners being reusable, we would look to add to these with the instillation of extra banners and signage on Kerr Street.
- o More lighting to be installed at Fawcett Park to better assist with trading hours.
- o Work closer with the Chamber of Commerce to involve more Ballina businesses.



SNAPSHOT

DATE	Number of stallholders	Banked
29/12/2011	20	\$610
5/01/2012	21	\$650
12/01/2012	24	\$770
19/01/2012	28	\$900
26/01/2012	00	Cancelled
3/02/2012	18	\$620
9/02/2012	12	\$375
16/02/2012	20	\$630
23/02/2012	7	\$225
1/03/2012	19	\$550