

Country Week – 230605(032)

RESOLVED: (K. Johnson/S. Cadwallader)

That Council notes that there will not be a formal Ballina exhibition at Country Week 2005 however there will be a co-ordinated regional approach for Country Week 2006.

Country Week

Background

Council considered a report at the March 2005 meeting that provided an overview of the "Country Week" Expo to be held at Parramatta in early August this year. The report stated that the Community Economic Development Officer, who was shortly to commence with Council, would evaluate the benefits of attending that exhibition.

The following report provides that evaluation.

Information

The 'Country Week' Expo objective, as marketed by the event organisers, is to encourage exhibitors to showcase regions that want to target business, professional or skills shortages.

Evaluation reports from the 2004 Country Week Expo suggest that the majority of attendees came seeking information about the availability of jobs in various locations. The Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) work closely with the organisers of Country Week by assisting in the preparation of applications for funding assistance to identify and promote the skill shortages in regional communities.

If Council wishes to attend Country Week the cost of the options available (excluding staff time) are:

- Ballina Shire only - 1 site, web site and marketing campaign \$ 8,860
- Regional co-operative – 1 site, web site and marketing campaign \$13,860 (total cost to group of potentially four local government areas – eg Ballina, Lismore, Clarence and Kyogle all of whom have economic development officers)

Current position

The 'Country Week' concept and other similar expos have merit as a vehicle to showcase what Ballina has to offer in living standards, employment opportunities, training institutes, investment and potential for doing business. However the cost to benefit ratio is high and it may be more appropriate to allocate funding to a regional promotional strategy as an initial project.

This matter was raised at a recent meeting that consisted of economic developer officers from other councils in the region (Lismore, Kyogle, Clarence) and a representative from the Northern Rivers Economic Development Board. There was general agreement from this group that the preferred approach was to assess the Country Week 2005 expo with a view to the provision of a regional site for 2006.

The Ballina Chamber of Commerce has also decided to look at Country Week as a project for 2006. They intend to survey members to ascertain interest in a regional approach during the coming 12 months.

Based on the discussions held to date the regional group now intend to send one representative to Country Week 2005 to assess and report on exhibitor trends (who is exhibiting and what), participation rates, collateral required to be competitive etc.

Subject to the outcomes from this assessment the economic development officers in the region then intend to establish a coordinated regional approach for Country Week 2006. This co-ordinated approach will also involve the development of an overall regional economic promotional strategy to showcase Ballina and the region at a range of tradeshows, not just Country Week.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes that there will not be a formal Ballina exhibition at Country Week 2005 however there will be a co-ordinated regional approach for Country Week 2006.