

- Discussion Paper -  
*Economy*



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Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census  
ID Profile Willoughby Community Profile

## **1. Introduction**

This paper examines various aspects of economic development within Willoughby City. The paper is one of 6 issue papers (others considering governance, housing, infrastructure, culture and environment). This document will provide a broad overview of the current trends and issues relating to economic development within Willoughby City Council as well as future directions. The topics to be discussed are:

- Employment
- Local Business and Industry
- Central Business Districts
- Tourism and marketing

## 2. Background

Located only 8.5 kms from the Sydney CBD, Willoughby includes the suburbs of Artarmon, Castlecrag, Castle Cove, Chatswood, Middle Cove, Naremburn, Northbridge and Willoughby, as well as parts of Gore Hill, Lane Cove, St. Leonards and Roseville.

According to 2011 ABS statistics Willoughby has a population of approximately 67,358 people and an estimated 28,017 households. It has a day time population of 130,000. It enjoys a diverse ethnic and cultural mix, with people coming from a wealth of different backgrounds. It contains neighbourhood shopping areas such as at Naremburn, Willoughby Road, Castlecrag, Castle Cove and Penshurst Street. The Northbridge shops within the Plaza serve the local area as well as a wider district catchment.

Sydney is Australia's "economic powerhouse" and only global city. More people work in business services, retail and property than in manufacturing, traditionally the biggest sector for employment. Sydney's population is growing faster than previously expected. Revised NSW forecasts show Sydney's population is expected to grow by 1.7 million people between 2006 and 2036 to 6 million- an average annual rise of 56,650. (Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036, NSW Government).

Chatswood is Willoughby's main economic centre. Chatswood along with St Leonards, East Chatswood Industrial Area and the Artarmon Industrial Area is part of "Sydney's Global Economic Corridor" that forms the "knowledge related" business corridor of Sydney where one end of the corridor is anchored at the Airport and the other end stretches to the north and northwest suburbs.

The global economic corridor is substantial- clustering jobs and economic activity in finance and business services, information intensive industries, global and national transport and multimedia.

The Chatswood to Epping rail link opened in 2007. In addition to the new underground line, this major transportation project also includes the redevelopment of the Chatswood Interchange site and the area adjoining the station for retail and residential use. Another major infrastructure project, the Lane Cove tunnel which links the Gore Hill expressway to the M2 as part of Sydney's orbital network was completed in 2007.

These improved connections are in keeping with the State Government's aim to support Sydney's economy by encouraging jobs to be located in centres such as Chatswood and St Leonards that are handy to transport. This provides good access to jobs, makes best use of the transport system and makes for more interesting and dynamic places.

### 3. Employment

#### ***WILLOUGHBY RESIDENTS***

There were 33,653 persons who reside in Willoughby City in the labour force in 2011, of which 9,338 were employed part-time (26.5%) and 22,583 were full time workers (64%) according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Analysis of the employment status of the population in the Willoughby City in 2006 compared to Greater Sydney shows that there was a larger proportion in employment, and a smaller proportion unemployed.

Overall, 95.4% of the labour force was employed (61.8% of the population aged 15+), and 4.6% unemployed (3% of the population aged 15+), compared with 94.3% and 5.7% respectively for Greater Sydney.

Between 2006 and 2011, the number of residents employed increased by 1,758 persons and the number unemployed increased by 470 persons.

The labour force participation rate refers to the proportion of the population over 15 years of age that was employed or actively looking for work. "The labour force is a fundamental input to domestic production. Its size and composition are therefore crucial factors in economic growth. From the viewpoint of social development, earnings from paid work are a major influence on levels of economic well-being." (Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Australian Social Trends 1995](#)).

Analysis of the labour force participation rate of the population in the Willoughby City in 2011 shows that there was a larger proportion in the labour force (64.8%) compared with Greater Sydney (61.7%).

Between 2006 and 2011 in the Willoughby City the number of people in the labour force showed an increase of 2,228 people, or 6.7%.

An analysis by the ABS of the occupations held by the resident population in the Willoughby City in 2011 shows the three most popular occupations were:

- Professionals (13,439 persons or 39.9%);
- Managers (6,139 persons or 18.2%);
- Clerical and Administrative Workers (4,719 persons or 14%).

In combination, these three occupations accounted for 24,297 people in total or 72.2% of the employed resident population.

In comparison, Greater Sydney employed 25.5% as Professionals; 13.3% as managers; and 16.2% as clerical and Administrative workers.

The major differences between the occupations of the population of the Willoughby City and Greater Sydney were

- A larger percentage of persons employed as Professionals (39.9% compared to 25.5%);
- A larger percentage of persons employed as Managers (18.2% compared to 13.3%);
- A smaller percentage persons employed as Technicians and Trades Workers (6.9% compared to 12.7%), and;
- A smaller percentage persons employed as Labourers (3.2% compared to 7.3%).

## ***OCCUPATION AND LOCATION OF THE EMPLOYED***

At the time of the 2011 Census there was a total of 18,436 men in the labour force of the 25,775 men aged 15+ living in Willoughby. This equated to a participation rate of 71.5%. Of the 28,719 women aged 15+, 16,855 were in the labour force. This equated to a female participation rate of 58.6%.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 74.5% of residents of Willoughby City work outside the LGA mostly in the City of Sydney or other northern Sydney local government areas.

## ***THE WILLOUGHBY WORKFORCE***

According to the 2011 ABS statistics the number of people who work in Willoughby has decreased from 51,426 in 2006 to 48,819 in 2011. Of the 48,819 people who work in Willoughby 17.6% (8,583) reside in Willoughby and 82.4% live outside but work in Willoughby.

The City has large numbers of residents, employees and visitors moving in and out of the City each day. With recent transport infrastructure improvements such as the Chatswood – Epping rail link and the Lane Cove Tunnel, access to employment from other areas to Willoughby will improve.

### ***INCOME DISTRIBUTION***

An analysis of the household income levels in 2011 for Willoughby City relative to the Greater Sydney showed that there was a larger proportion of high income households (those earning \$2,500 per week or more) and a lower proportion of low income households (those earning less than \$600 per week).

### ***GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT***

Willoughby is one of seven local government areas that make up the Northern Sydney Region of Councils (NSROC). The region's estimated Gross Regional Product (GRP) is estimated to be around \$48,304 million. NSROC region GRP represents 11.7% of the New South Wales' GRP for the year ending June 2012.

#### Possible Future Directions

- Decreasing rate of residents in the Willoughby LGA working in trades.
- Importance to the State economy of the global corridor and ensuring basic services and infrastructure are maintained to support this continued role.

## 4. Key Strategic Direction - 5.1–Local Business and Industry

**Goal: To promote the City's position as a preferred location for a range of business and industry that is responsible and responsive to the local community and the environment.**

In order to ensure the long-term viability of the City's Strip Shopping Centres and other economic zones such as the Artarmon and East Chatswood Industrial precincts, it is essential that Council, together with owners and business groups develop innovative and effective strategies which:

- i) promote the strength and diversity of the mix in each precinct
- ii) retain and improve each centre's distinct identity
- iii) maintain accessibility for users and visitors
- iv) develop a level of mutual support between the public sector and the private sector
- v) provide the required catalyst for infrastructure to support the economic growth and viability of each centre.

Spectrum Group Australia compiled a Local Business Districts (LBD) Summary Report and Recommendations in 2000 on behalf of Council. Their findings included a summary of floor space within a total of 15 Local Business Districts of Willoughby which are summarised as follows:

- Naremburn is principally food retailing
- Penshurst Street and Willoughby Road are primarily non-food retail and business services particularly home improvements
- High Street has a number of varying types of businesses with a strong fresh food retail component.
- Castlecrag has a high number of retailers, particularly food and convenience
- Middle Cove has no food retail, but small numbers of the other categories.
- Castle Cove has food, but no non-food retail
- Northbridge (strip area) has a high number of non-food retail, business services, professional and personal services.
- Northbridge Plaza is high retail.
- Chatswood West, small food retail.
- Roseville is non-food retail.
- Artarmon is predominantly food retail, with even representation of other categories.
- St Leonards is Business Services for the section of the suburb in Willoughby City Council. (Note – since the LBD study was carried out, Railway Plaza Forum has been completed, which includes small food and other shops at ground level with commercial and residential development above).

### Northbridge

One of the larger retailing local business districts is Northbridge. In October 2003, following an urban design study with local business owners, Council adopted the Northbridge Town Centre Masterplan. The Masterplan aims to:

1. Establish a gateway presence which identifies Northbridge as an entry to the Willoughby City area;



2. Create a cohesive, vibrant, comfortable and safe centre that retains its village atmosphere and provides a high level of amenity for all categories of users e.g. residents, visitors and workers;
3. Determine appropriate limits and opportunities for future development recognising the surrounding residential context; and
4. Support the continuation of a thriving and prosperous business area with a mix of uses consistent with an agreed strategy for the role of Northbridge.

The recommendations of the Master Plan have been included in the draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 and Willoughby Development Control Plan.

During 2008 Council in consultation with AMP (the owner's representative of Northbridge Plaza) and the community worked on the preparation of draft guidelines or principles for the preparation of a Master Plan to improve the future use of the Plaza and adjoining Council owned car park. The project was discontinued as the parameters imposed at the time by the Council and community meant that the spatial concept was considered to be commercially unviable. A challenge in the future will be for the community, Council and the owners of the Plaza to develop a successful concept both in terms of amenity and economics.

In the short term, Council is considering improvements to the Council owned car park to make it more safe and functional.

## **GENERAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE LOCAL CENTRES**

### **1. Land use Interface**

Challenges associated with the planning for local business centres include dealing with the interface of two different zones. In Willoughby there are many cases where residential properties adjoin a business zone and often share a common boundary. Some of the resulting problems include:

- Intrusion of non-residential traffic in residential zones. Residential streets are forced to suffer increased traffic particularly at peak times. This is often complicated by regional traffic filtering through these streets in order to avoid congested intersections on arterial roads. Traffic problems associated with through traffic is an issue with almost every local centre, as is car parking and service vehicle access.
- Long stay parking in residential streets. This is often attributed to employees of the centres (in which many properties do not have onsite parking) or commuter parking.
- Noise
- Overshadowing and loss of privacy which can result from redevelopment and the consequent changes to building form.

### **2. Competition and impact from larger centres**

Whilst growth in the larger centres of Chatswood and St Leonards is supported it is important that the long term viability of other business areas of the city is not overlooked. It noted that it is essential that Council, together with owners and business groups develops innovative and effective strategies which:

- i) promote the strength and diversity of the mix in each centre
- ii) retain and improve each centre's distinct identity
- iii) maintain accessibility for users and visitors
- iv) develop a level of mutual support between public and private sector

- v) provide the catalyst for infrastructure to support the economic growth and viability of each centre.

Council's strip shopping centre work and action by the Chatswood CBD Place Manager and Economic Development Manager have assisted these goals.

### **3. The Changing Nature of Retail**

New patterns of shopping have emerged in recent times to meet business, employment, household and leisure needs. A diverse range of retail formats has been created to meet changing consumer preferences and behaviour. Along with the increasing trend for people to shop on line and to consider shopping as recreation and a chance to meet people and go window shopping, there has also been an increase in demand for diverse retail formats. In recent years "big box" formats and discount outlets have emerged alongside strong growth in more established sectors such as bulky goods and supermarkets.

A challenge for Council is to ensure that existing local centres and CBD areas remain vibrant whilst also accommodating the demand by bulky goods retailers and supermarkets for larger premises and extra car parking provision. Council needs to balance the demand for emerging retail formats with the need to retain service and industrial land for the City and the North Shore.

### **4. Local Centres Precinct Strategy**

Following the Spectrum study Council has been undertaking a local centres revitalisation program. Some of the measures to date include streetscape improvements in Artarmon, Naremburn, Penshurst St, Willoughby Rd, local traffic and parking improvements to Castle Cove and preparation of a Northbridge Town Centre Masterplan.

As stated previously, during 2008 Council also embarked on a comprehensive community consultation regarding the future of the Northbridge Plaza and Council car park, however, this matter has not progressed due to economic viability and community opposition.

The Artarmon and "Loop" shuttle service cater for future employment growth and has reduced the demand for parking and supports the business community. Patronage numbers have grown from 1000 per week when the service commenced in 2009 to 5000 per week in 2012. The Loop (free of charge) transports people to and from commercial hubs at Artarmon, Northbridge and Chatswood to Council's main community facilities and libraries.

The draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 supports the local centres by encouraging shop top housing and some higher density residential adjoining centres in Northbridge, Victoria Ave/Penshurst St and Willoughby Road .

#### ***POSSIBLE FUTURE DIRECTIONS***

- Increased accessibility of Chatswood since the opening of the Chatswood – Epping rail link - Increased number of visitors / employees to Chatswood CBD and the associated "knock on" effects for the remainder of Willoughby.
- Role and importance of local business districts as village centres to provide community focus.
- Changing nature of retailing including on-line retailing and the "blurring" of the distinction between industrial and commercial development.
- Future development of Northbridge Town Centre and Plaza and adjoining Council car park.

## ***INDUSTRY***

### **State Context**

The “global corridor” from North Ryde through to the City, includes the Artarmon and East Chatswood Industrial Areas. The impacts of Globalisation suggests that this corridor will continue to be critical in supporting advanced business services development including health, finance, public administration and utilities and “knowledge based” industry such as biomedical, high technology, research etc.

Increasing decentralisation of employment away from inner city areas including Willoughby is likely to occur in traditional industries such as manufacturing, utilities and distribution.

The Inner North Subregional Strategy plans for an additional 16,000 jobs for the Willoughby local government area by 2031. The Strategy identifies the industrial areas of Artarmon and East Chatswood as important generators of employment growth and land to be retained for industrial purposes.

According to data prepared for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure as part of the Employment Lands Program in 2010, the Willoughby LGA has the highest number in the inner north of people working in Employment Lands (14,000) jobs. This accounts for approximately 23% of the LGA’s workforce and illustrates the importance of employment lands for job creation within the LGA and wider subregion.

The Inner North Sub Regional Strategy supports the review and implementation of planning controls (now implemented by Council) for the Artarmon industrial area to enable higher intensity industrial employment uses in areas with good public transport.

## **Artarmon / East Chatswood Industrial Areas**

In terms of industrial land zoned per capita, Willoughby with a ratio of 12.9m<sup>2</sup> per capita, is similar to the ratio for inner North West Sydney of 13.7m<sup>2</sup> per capita but falls short below the average for the Sydney Statistical District of 30.5m<sup>2</sup> per capita.

The Artarmon area encompasses 60 ha of industrial sites. It is one of the main industrial areas on the North Shore with good accessibility to the Sydney CBD and population on the Lower North Shore. Uses include motor vehicle showrooms & servicing, wholesale of a variety of goods and machinery and some heavy industry such as concrete batching plants. Local service industry is also important. (Local service industry has a local focus and is made up of industry such as automotive mechanics, basic engineering, building supplies, etc).

East Chatswood is approximately half the size of Artarmon with 26 ha of industrial sites. Uses include High Technology, some manufacturing, motor vehicle servicing & showrooms and local service industry occupies around 25% of the area.

Willoughby plays a key role in the Lower North Shore and in “global” Sydney’s competitive positioning. The Willoughby LGA industrial areas also fulfil a key role as areas hosting industry servicing the sub-regional population or other businesses in the CBD and Lower North Shore. The adjacent LGA’s of Ku ring gai and North Sydney have little industrial land. It is important to preserve a role for the industrial areas in this regard.

SGS Economics and Planning undertook a review of the industrial areas in 2004 and the changes in the way industry is undertaken. In recognition of modern industrial trends that utilise more high technology (as opposed to traditional manufacturing uses), Council introduced new planning provisions in 2007 which will also assist with employment generation. The changes that will lead to an increase in employment capacity include both additional floor space and additional uses which generate a higher number of employees per square metre. These are the removal of restrictions on the size of the ancillary office in certain areas, permissibility of high technology in certain areas and the increase in floor space potential from 1:1 to 1.5:1 for sites greater than 1000 sqm. It is expected that at least an additional 7,600 jobs can be catered for in the industrial lands by 2031.

An ongoing challenge in the industrial areas is the pressure from retail related uses such as bulky goods and large supermarkets and commercial uses which are attracted to the cheaper land values and larger land size.

This was exemplified by two recent planning proposals for a Woolworths supermarket in the East Chatswood industrial area and a “Masters” bulky goods/ hardware development in Artarmon which were refused by Council because the nature of the proposed retail uses would undermine the strategic importance of the industrial areas which have been identified as category 1 employment areas in the Metropolitan Plan and draft regional inner north strategy.

### **Possible Future Directions**

- Encourage investment / jobs
- Balance of retaining existing traditional service industries against the demand for High Technology uses and retail related uses.

## **5. Key Strategic Direction - 5.2 Central Business Districts (CBDs)**

**Goal: To have accessible, prosperous, safe, convenient and attractive Central Business Districts providing a desirable range and quality of services.**

### ***CHATSWOOD***

The business community of Willoughby City comprises retail and commercial businesses which are owned and managed by local, national and international companies. Chatswood Town Centre has a multifunctional role as the main centre for the residents of Willoughby and in providing facilities and services for the broader community of the sub region.

Chatswood is also one of the most successful retail areas in Australia, with its growth most significant over the past twenty years. The major retail centres now attract shoppers from across the metropolitan Sydney area, and from the Central Coast.

Chatswood, as a Strategic employment centre has been designated by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure as a Major Centre within the draft Inner North Subregional Strategy. The Chatswood Vision and Strategic Plan 2008 (adopted in November 2010) and relevant planning instruments reinforce this policy position.

The Centre provides a mix of uses that serve the immediate Subregion including retail, civic, commercial and community facilities. According to a study by Hill PDA in 2010, 45% of all jobs within Chatswood (11,437) were generated within the Chatswood Office Precinct based on 2006 data. This represents greater than one sixth of all jobs in the LGA.

As the main employment centre for the LGA, a job growth target of 7,300 jobs was established for Chatswood in the Subregional strategy. However, this is unlikely to be met according to Hill PDA and it estimates that the majority of the growth will be in the retail precinct around Chatswood Chase and Westfield (about 82%) rather than the Chatswood Office precinct (about 10%).

Traffic congestion in and around Chatswood is an ongoing challenge as is car parking management. The promotion of public transport is also critical in supporting a well serviced and thriving CBD.

### ***RETAIL***

According to the Property Council of Australia, Chatswood is the largest single retail centre outside the Sydney CBD with a catchment extending from North Sydney to Hornsby and east to the northern beaches. (Chatswood City Centre Strategic Plan 2008)

There are over 20 million shopper visits to Chatswood each year based on monitoring carried out by the major centres of Westfield and Chatswood Chase.

Based on the 2001 census population data and 2021 projections, Willoughby retail expenditure totalled \$671 million in 2001, with a projected total expenditure in 2021 of \$977.5 million in the retail sector.

At June 2006 the residential population in the trade area covering the Chatswood CBD was estimated to be close to 430,000. The majority of people shopping in the area have larger than average annual incomes in comparison to the statistical division. The total trade area retail spending is estimated at \$5.26 billion in 2006 and this is expected to grow. (Chatswood Chase Economic Impact Assessment, Urbis JHD 2007).

Chatswood's 2 main retail centres are Westfield Shoppingtown and Chatswood Chase. Chatswood Chase has recently been expanded and renovated. It has 217 tenants with an annual sales turnover of \$483m (2012).

Westfield, with its 290 retailers has an annual turnover of \$503.5m (2011) and is also a major retail centre for the northern region.

The maintenance of Chatswood as a retail destination is less contingent upon increasing floor space and more a case of maintaining a diverse retail experience and attractiveness. In this regard Chatswood is fortunate to not be dominated by one shopping centre. The retail style offered differs between the two main centres and the strip shopping that connects them.

Chatswood has approximately 190,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail space within Westfield and Chatswood Chase along with other smaller retail centres such as the Mandarin Centre, Lemon Grove Centre arcades and strip shopping in Chatswood CBD. It has potential to rise to 240,000m<sup>2</sup> by 2031 and will include the construction of a convenience and food based retail centre of some 10,000m<sup>2</sup> above the Chatswood railway station.

## **OFFICE**

The main office sector in Chatswood CBD is located between the railway line and the Pacific Highway. Chatswood's office precinct has a distinctive architectural style and finish. The skyline prominence of Chatswood adds to its profile and identity and is visible from many locations in the northern region.

There is growing pressure from the private development market to introduce non employment generating land uses within the Chatswood office precinct. Owing to market conditions and demand, high density residential development has been considered the short term higher and better use from a development perspective. This position has been exacerbated by changing office market conditions, business requirements and business confidence (owing in part to the Global Financial crisis (GFC)). (Hill PDA 2010)

Strong demand in the 1990s and 2000s from the residential sector has "outbid" the commercial sector. The demand has resulted in the extensive redevelopment of prime sites in the area for high rise residential. In addition, the leakage of office space from established major centres like Chatswood to business parks such as Macquarie Park makes it more difficult to attract office based jobs. In this regard there has been a trend towards large floor plate purpose built offices in business parks, which provide opportunities to, for example , collocate commercial offices with high tech sectors and research and development.

This has occurred to the extent that the area between the railway line and Pacific Highway may well fall short of realising its full potential as a major sub regional commercial centre. This will certainly happen if high rise residential development is permitted to continue unabated at the expense of commercial.

Despite the Council, in 1999 amending planning controls to limit the amount of residential floor space in Chatswood CBD, this problem has continued with the state government approval of high rise residential development in prime office development locations under the previous Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Council commissioned a Chatswood Office Precinct Economic Analysis by Hill PDA in 2010 to help plan the future of the precinct. It confirmed the important employment role of the Chatswood commercial centre despite constraints such as changes in the economic climate, the nature of the building stock and the growing perception of Chatswood as a residential and retail

focused centre as opposed to a prestigious office location and pressure from alternative locations such as North Ryde and Macquarie Park.

The draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 includes planning provisions to support the retention of the Chatswood CBD office core including some increased density to make it viable for underdeveloped and obsolete sites to be redeveloped to provide and accommodate growth to create more than 7,000 jobs.

### **CHATSWOOD VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Chatswood Vision and Strategic Plan adopted by Council in November 2010 has been formulated with a vision that will guide planning and land use decisions for the next 20 years. Some of the aims of the Plan include that Chatswood will:

- Be a vibrant and multi functional business district serving a local and regional role;
- Be recognised as a major retailing destination for the region as well as a prestigious office centre for major corporations.
- Provide for city living
- Be environmentally sustainable
- Be a hub for public transport
- Be a hub for meetings information exchange and learning
- Be characterised by buildings, public art and places that integrate with and enhance the positive features of the centre.
- Be characterised by visually interesting buildings and places with a diversity of activity at street level.
- Provide pleasant landscaped areas and public spaces for passive recreation and outdoor eating.
- Provide safe and easy access for all members of the community.
- Be a focus for community activity and a centre for the arts and cultural events.
- Be a centre where residential and commercial uses complement each other.

The following Table 2 demonstrates the changes that are anticipated for Chatswood over the next 20 years:

**Table 2**

	<b>Where we are</b>	<b>Where we are planning to be</b>
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2025</b>
Commercial floor space	301,300m	400,000m
Office vacancy rate	10.5%	<7%
Retail floor space	190,000m	240,000m
Yearly shopper visits	40 million	60 million
No of dwellings	2,600	4,000
Residential population	5,500	8,500
Employment workforce	23,000	30,000
Meeting places open space	14,500m	23,000m
% public transport use for journey to work	35%	70%

Source: Vision and strategic Plan Chatswood City Centre Plan 2008 adopted by Council Nov 2010

**Table 2** indicates major changes anticipated in Chatswood CBD in terms of the built form and numbers of population / visitors / employees.

### ***RECENT INFRASTRUCTURE MEASURES TO IMPROVE BUSINESS IN CHATSWOOD.***

Chatswood CBD has recently undertaken a transformation with the redevelopment of key sites such as The Concourse, Chatswood Transport Interchange, “Eat Street” (Anderson St/ Victoria Ave) and Chatswood Chase combining to change the face and lift the amenity of the CBD. In addition to providing a high quality of architecture and urban design these changes have generated a new interest in the CBD with dining and entertainment, greater access to public transport and a safer and more pleasant pedestrian environment. The new Chatswood CBD is attractive to residents and workers alike and is generating new interest for visitors, all of which is a positive step in the economic development of the area.

In February 2010 Council refurbished the heavily used Chatswood Mall in the Victoria Ave pedestrian strip in Victoria Ave, creating a more open and accessible public promenade and destination. The mall now provides a new modern space incorporating public meeting places, entertainment areas and lighting. Over 35,000 people pass through the mall daily.

The Concourse was opened in 2011 and replaced the former civic centre. It includes a new 5000m<sup>2</sup> public library, landscaped and terraced open space, a 1000 seat concert hall, a 500 seat theatre, a multipurpose/exhibition hall, rehearsal space, studios, visual arts space, cafes, retail, urban screen and car parking.

The 11,000sqm public site is a state of the art entertainment and events precinct also providing facilities for conferences and venues for hire.

### ***ST LEONARDS***

St Leonards is also a key centre in Sydney’s “global corridor” and is described as a Specialised Economic Centre in the NSW Government’s Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney because of its scale of office employment and strategic location along rail and bus networks. It provides regionally significant concentrations of employment, health, education and lifestyle related activities at a location well serviced by public transport as well as supporting areas of higher density residential development. St Leonards is one of the major employment concentrations in Sydney and is located within the three local government areas of Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove.

The draft Inner North Strategy sets a target of 8,000 more jobs and 5000 more dwellings in St Leonards by 2031.

The St Leonards/ Crows Nest area contains a series of activity concentrations including the traditional Crows Nest strip centre based on Willoughby Road, the bulky goods retail strip along the Pacific Highway, the concentrated high rise office development at St Leonards, the health and education campuses in Willoughby, west of the railway, activities supporting the hospital plus office development south of the Highway and high rise residential development in and around the Centre.

The Royal North Shore hospital is under going redevelopment to become a state of the art regional hospital facility with associated infrastructure. Another significant redevelopment site in the Willoughby part of St Leonards is the previous car service centre in Chandos St next to the railway.

In 2004, Lane Cove, North Sydney and Willoughby councils together with DIPNR (now known as the Department of Planning and Infrastructure) prepared a Strategy and Planning



Principles Agreement for the cohesive and integrated development of St Leonards as a subregional centre of high significance within the Sydney Metropolitan Region. It is an opportunity to provide an integrated strategy for the St Leonards Centre which is an area in transition where urban renewal and redevelopment is occurring within all three areas. It identifies how the City Centre can be strengthened, examines sustainability, access, amenity and open space and establishes a co-ordinated planning approach from the Councils involved. Council's draft WLEP 2012 and WDCP implements the planning controls arising from the Strategy.

***POSSIBLE FUTURE DIRECTIONS***

- Council needs to develop an integrated plan for the Chatswood CBD linking the land use, tourism, urban design, transport, parking, open space, entertainment and security.

## **6. Key Strategic Direction – 5.3 Tourism, Marketing and Investment**

**Goal: Willoughby City is a destination for retail, investment, corporate, visual and performing arts opportunities.**

In 2011 Council oversaw the development of a specific marketing strategy to attract tourism and business to the City. While results of the Strategy can be better measured over the next few years as it is fully implemented, initial indications show an increased regional knowledge of Chatswood in particular. The Concourse has also attracted broad media attention. The venue has acquired the attention of national and international artists (including the English National Ballet) which in turn has generated significant interest in the Willoughby area, Chatswood in particular. The NSW Farmers Federation and Local Government and Shires Association held their annual conferences at the venue in winter 2012.

The development of Brand Chatswood and the creation of the “It all starts at Chatswood” campaign involved the collaboration and coordination of local businesses which saw a unified Chatswood marketing program. Its aim was to reposition Chatswood as a complete destination with food, shopping and entertainment. Again, early indications suggest increased business for restaurants in the CBD particularly restaurants located in the close vicinity of The Concourse.

There has also been positive engagement between Council and Chatswood businesses, and the commencement of a communication stream between Council and Chatswood businesses about marketing Chatswood.

Additional measures to support business in Chatswood include the completion of a marketing strategy exercise which will produce an action plan aimed at bringing tourism to Chatswood and increasing the City’s brand image as an entertainment, dining and shopping destination.

In early 2011 Council initiated a dedicated Business Engagement Program. This involved creation of a new “Business in Willoughby” page on the Council website and the “Growing Your Business” brochure for small to medium businesses. Council contacted 11,149 businesses by mail and email in 2011 using data obtained via the Australian Business Registry (ABR) to survey them regarding their needs and the role of Council in facilitating to local business outcomes. One of the initiatives that resulted from the survey was the request from home businesses to establish opportunities for networking. To date four network events have been held with industry experts presenting to the group on subjects nominated by participants. Council was also represented at a Cantonese Business Seminar held in December 2011. Information about Council’s business resources and procedures was presented to local Cantonese speaking business owners in Cantonese and English.

The Better Business Partnership (BBP) which commenced in June 2009 is a program to assist small to medium sized businesses across North Sydney, Willoughby and Ku-ring-gai Council areas, on Sydney’s North Shore, to become more sustainable. BBP has developed an electronic business appraisal tool and accreditation system. Partnered with regional marketing an interactive website and consumer awareness campaign the program promotes sustainable achievements within businesses in the area. Registered member receive access to a free BBP Appraisal of their business operations, benchmarking their level of performance in seven key areas of sustainability, including, energy water and waste as well as community and staff initiatives, transport and purchasing. The appraisal tool then generates an action plan that identifies areas of opportunities and relevant behavioural, technological and support suggestions.

Since its commencement BBP has assisted access to more than \$88,000 in funding for implementation of energy savings, through NSW Office of Environment and Heritage's Energy Efficiency for Small Business Program and Community Savers Grant. Actual greenhouse gas emissions saved through energy efficiency equal 417 annual tonnes of CO2-e savings. Working closely with the businesses, the team has provided support to implement our specific, relevant recommendations. BBP has facilitated access to 130 members to the NSW Governments Energy Efficiency for Small Business Program.

#### Possible Future Directions

- Implement the "It all Starts at Chatswood" strategy
- Continue the Better Business Partnership

## **7. Gaps/Future Planning Needs**

- Changing retail and commercial/office/industrial park markets. Undertake a new employment/commercial land use study in 2013. Review the role of retailing/commercial in the City/hierarchies/role of industrial areas. Make recommendations for further directions for Centres.
- Integrate the planning and promotion of Chatswood CBD in terms of land use, tourism, urban design, transport, parking, open space, entertainment and security.
- Implementation of the Northbridge Master Plan and continued preparation of a Master Plan for Northbridge Plaza and adjoining Council car park.