



Community Economic Development

Snowy River – success story

Challenges and opportunities

People often express surprise that the Snowy River Shire is the second fastest growing Local Government Area (LGA) outside the Sydney basin. This sort of growth is not expected from a place in the mountains.

Set in Australia's legendary high country, the Snowy Mountains' main industry is tourism. Traditionally, there has been a strong peak of activity in the winter and a decline in trade in the summer; with many businesses in the area opened only during the colder months.

This seasonable fluctuation in business activity, varying cash flow and income, affected most of the towns in the region, and everyone in those towns. Increased summer tourism was needed to enable many businesses to become sustainable year round, which would have a corresponding effect on the economies of the towns in the area.

The NSW Government's funding from its Main Street / Small Towns Program, and its Towns and Villages Futures Program, has helped a number of Snowy Mountains centres start to reverse the seasonable fluctuation trend. There is now a noticeable change in summer activity in the region and over the past three years summer visitor numbers have increased significantly. More businesses now stay open throughout the year or at least re-open for peak periods.

Thredbo

Thredbo's Main Street / Small Towns Program, which was first funded in 1999, focused on building summer tourism and using the flow-on economic benefits to help Thredbo businesses.

Thredbo has faced more than its share of trouble in recent times. Two appalling natural disasters hit the town in a span of just eight years. First there was the widely reported and catastrophic landslide in 1997, with subsequent loss of life; then came the devastating bushfires which swept through the surrounding Kosciuszko National Park in early 2003.

The Thredbo business community has had to recover from these setbacks. Over the past six years, the Main Street / Small Towns Program has funded a number of initiatives, including a bushfire recovery project and the employment of a co-ordinator to assist in the development of the area.

Backed by the Main Street / Small Towns Program, the Thredbo Chamber of Commerce has actively worked to assist the community and increase summer tourism through attracting events and developing cooperative marketing projects with members. Events have included Participation Day - a weekend for local residents to experience Thredbo and the annual Thredbo Blues and Jazz Festivals aimed at bringing visitors into the mountains during the warmer months.

Jindabyne

Jindabyne also reflects the high winter / low summer profile of the region. The town has a population of more than 8,000 in the winter and only about 3,500 in the summer, with subsequent peaks and troughs in business activity levels.

Jindabyne Chamber of Commerce, with funding through the Main Street / Small Towns Program, is helping to change this situation. The program has funded a number of workshops, the employment of a co-ordinator for two years, and the promotion of a summer festival of events which benefits local businesses by using Lake Jindabyne in the off-peak season.

Much has already been achieved. Jindabyne is now coming closer to being a year-round destination. Athletes visit the area for summer altitude training and the Australian Water Ski National titles are held each year on the Lake.

The 2004/05 Jindabyne Lakeside Festival, which was held over the summer to Easter period, was a great success and served to show the local community what could be done in the area during this time of the year. More than 5,000 people came to the town during The Flowing Festival time.

There have been other signs of resurgence around Jindabyne. Some property prices have risen 100 percent over the past five years and in 2006 the Jindabyne Central School servicing years K-10 will be opened, making the area more attractive to families.

The Jindabyne and Thredbo Chambers of Commerce have worked together to ensure the benefits of the increased economic activity are spread across the region.

Photos from left to right: Thredbo, Lake Jindabyne, the Big Trout at Adaminaby, the bridge over the Snowy River at Dalgety

Dalgety

Dalgety is a hamlet of only 150 people, but this small town has hosted a food fair for the past four years, drawing some 3,000 people to the village.

In 2004, using the experience gained through the food fair, Dalgety held a different event, the first Snowy River Festival. This time, 2,500 people attended. Later in 2005, both events will be combined and 3,000-5,000 people are expected, depending on the weather.

Funding provided through the Towns and Villages Futures Program in 2002 was used for printing brochures, an accommodation directory and a pamphlet for a historic town walk. Further funding in 2004 is being used toward coordination and marketing costs for the combined 2005 festival. The village works within a plan which was developed under the program.

There are other signs of growth. The Dalgety Chamber of Commerce has substantially increased its membership base, the service station recently re-opened, there has been a flow-on effect from the activity in Jindabyne thirty five kilometres away, and the village now has a positive outlook for its future.

Dalgety Chamber of Commerce is a finalist in the Business Enterprise Award category of the 2005 Regional Achievement and Community Awards.

Adaminaby

For Adaminaby, a village of about 300, the community chose a flagship event that would celebrate the region's rural and equine history. Based around the skills of stock handling, the Adaminaby High Country Challenge was first held in 2004 and now takes place annually.

The Challenge includes a Bare Back Obstacle Course, a Pack Saddle event, Whip Cracking, Horse Shoeing, and Stock Handling.

Funded initially by the Towns and Villages Futures Program, the event has also been backed by Adaminaby retailers and businesses, the Progress Association, Council, tourism

operators and the general public. In 2004 the event drew 1,500 people to Adaminaby, and in 2005, about 2,000.

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Local Government Area: Snowy River
Area: 6,040 square kilometres, 150 kilometres south of Canberra
Region: South East
Population: 8,000 in summer, rising to 20,000 in winter
Main industries: Tourism, agriculture – cattle, sheep