



Blue Mountains City Council

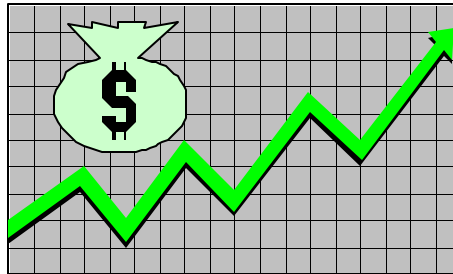
The City within a National Park

DRAFT

Economic

Development

Plan



*A sustainable, vibrant economy that maximises the
opportunity for residents to work locally*

July 2000

KEY DIRECTIONS as stated in Management Plan 2000/2001 – 2003/2004

- ***Inclusive Community***
To enhance community life in all towns and villages across the mountains
- ***Built Environment***
To preserve the character, heritage and amenity of our built environment
- ***Natural Environment***
To protect, restore and enhance our natural environment
- ***Local Employment***
To promote local sustainable economic development so that more people have the opportunity to work locally
- ***Better Council Services***
To ensure that Council services best meet community needs and are continuously improved

Our Goal

*To create a vibrant and dynamic community
which balances quality of life with
sustainable economic development*

Our Aim

*To provide regional leadership in the
development of local economic growth and
opportunities for employment and training
in the Blue Mountains.*

Principles for Economic Development in the Blue Mountains

In undertaking its economic development activities, Blue Mountains City Council is guided by the following principles:

- Commitment to the quality of life in the Blue Mountains and the need to ensure that economic development, employment and training opportunity is suited to the needs of a city within a national park;
- Commitment to the sustainable economic development of the Blue Mountains Local Government Area; and
- Commitment to constructive and informed debate about the options for action within the local community to improve the economic life of the local community.

Economic Development Strategies for the Blue Mountains

In order to meet our aim, Blue Mountains City Council has selected four strategies it will pursue in 2000/2001 – 2003/2004 management plan:

- Partnerships with key stakeholders to foster responsible economic development are in place
- Promotion of tourism within the area is supported
- The Blue Mountains, as the inaugural City of the Arts, is promoted as a cultural destination
- New businesses in harmony with the local environment are encouraged.

The activities supporting each of these strategies are discussed in detail later in this document.

Performance Indicators

Blue Mountains City Council believes that the following indicators of success are appropriate in judging its performance in economic development over the next four years:

- Agreed Economic Development Plan endorsed by Council and the community
- 6% net growth in new businesses
- 8% net growth in local employment through home based businesses, tourism and the arts and crafts sectors.
- There is more information available to existing and potential businesses and the community about opportunities for business in the Blue Mountains;
- There is a strong partnership between government agencies, employers and the community in working together to create economic growth and employment at the local level; and
- Council can demonstrate they have been proactive in stimulating and facilitating a number of regional initiatives that result in employment growth and skill development.

Key Initiatives

Working with and partnering alongside business and key stakeholders to promote responsible economic development within the Blue Mountains.

Actively promoting business opportunities that will complement existing businesses and meet community needs by way of literature, and highlighting suitable land areas for future development of business parks.

Promote a growth path from small home based businesses through to medium scale businesses without having to leave the LGA. Success of small business will provide local employment opportunities for the community.

Regional Profile

The geographic coverage of the Blue Mountains Local Government Area encompasses 26 towns and villages scattered across 100 kilometres of ridgeline. These diverse centres of population include highly urbanised towns, commuter towns and isolated rural townships. It is a most unusual urban structure not usually found in the one local government area. This is further compounded by the fact that the City of the Blue Mountains is surrounded by National Park, thus imposing significant limitations on the activities carried out within the local area and the future growth of the area and at the same time requiring the provision and maintenance of assets without any direct return.

The Blue Mountains Local Government Area also encompasses the Federal electorates of Lindsay and Macquarie and the State electorates of Blue Mountains and Penrith. The major towns within the area are: Blaxland, Springwood, Lawson, Katoomba and Blackheath. Katoomba is 108km from Sydney. The following table summarises the distances between the main towns and Katoomba:

Town	Distance	Town	Distance
Blaxland	39km	Lithgow	46km
Springwood	31km	Penrith	56km
Lawson	15km	Parramatta	85km (?)
Blackheath	11km	Sydney	110km

Table. Distance from Katoomba by rail

Commentary:

The nature of the Blue Mountains area means that the traditional forms of economic growth, which rely on a supply of “green field” sites for industrial development is not possible in this area. Further, given the environmental sensitivity of the area, the sorts of economic activity that can be carried out in the mountains are severely limited, both practically and also legislatively. Council is obliged to ensure that all development – including that of the local economy – is ecologically sustainable. As a result of these constraints, different approaches to economic development are required in the Blue Mountains.

Population, Age and Income Profile

- Total Population: 72,506¹
- Total Area: 1431.116 square km
- Population Density: 50.7 persons per square km
- Population Growth 1991-1996: 4.4% (ABS)

¹ (ABS Census of Population and Housing, 1996)

Regional Population

The population of the Blue Mountains is scattered over a large geographic area. Additionally, there have been a number of changes to the distribution of the population in towns across the Mountains over recent years.

Town	1991 Population	1996 Population	% Change
Megalong Valley	107	163	45%
Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine, Mt Tomah & Bell	172	303	73.1%
Mt Victoria	906	900	0.6%
Blackheath	3757	4119	9.9%
Medlow Bath	376	448	18.8%
Katoomba	8297	7544	2.9%
Leura	3622	3777	4.4%
Wentworth Falls	4998	5379	7.4%
Bullaburra	938	1018	8.8%
Lawson	2234	2250	0.8%
Hazlebrook	4113	4333	5.1%
Woodford/Linden	1979	2182	10.5%
Faulconbridge	3394	3793	11.4%
Springwood	6829	7112	4.3%
Winmalee	6883	7323	6.4%
Yellow Rock/Hawkesbury Heights	946	1143	21.7%
Valley Heights	1186	1175	-0.8%
Warrimoo	2209	2180	-1.8%
Blaxland	6878	7041	2.5%
Mt Riverview	3408	3245	-4.3%
Glenbrook	5088	5059	-0.7%
Lapstone	1113	1019	-8.4%
TOTAL	69452	72506	4.4%

Table. Population in towns across the Blue Mountains

Commentary:

There has been a continuing population increase in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area over the past fifteen years. The population rose from 55,877 in 1981 to 63,779 in 1986, an increase of about 8,000 or 14.3%. Between 1986 and 1991 the population rose by a further 5,600 to 69,380, an increase of 8.7%. Between 1991 and 1996 the rate of population increase slowed, rising to 72,506, an increase of 3,086 or 4.4%. The largest growth has taken part in the smaller villages of Medlow Bath, Megalong Valley and Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine/Mt Tomah/Bell, together with that in Yellow Rock/Hawkesbury Heights. More populated areas experiencing significant growth include Faulconbridge and Woodford/Linden. The only area experiencing significant negative growth is the township of Lapstone.

Regional Age Structure

Age Band	Blue Mountains	Blue Mountains (%)	NSW (%)
0-4	5235	7.3	7.1
5-9	5898	8.1	7.1
10-14	5951	8.2	7.1
15-19	5165	7.1	6.8
20-24	4033	5.6	7.2
25-34	8997	12.4	15.2
35-44	12247	16.9	15.2
45-54	9846	13.6	12.5
55-54	5815	8.0	8.5
65-74	4961	6.8	7.4
75-84	2993	4.1	4.1
85-94	794	1.2	1.1
95+	60	0.8	0.1
TOTAL	72506	100	100

Table. Age distribution of the Blue Mountains

Commentary:

The age profile of the Blue Mountains is generally in line with that for NSW, when % distributions are compared. There are three notable exceptions:

- there are significantly fewer than average in the 20-24 and 25-34 age groups;
- there are more than average in the 0-14 age group;
- there are more than average in the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that younger people move away from the Mountains in their 20's/early 30's but then move back again to raise families.

Regional Employment

Employment Category	Number of People	Blue Mountains (%)
Full time employment	20225	64.4%
Part time employment	10674	34%
Employed not stated	491	1.6%
Total	31390	100%

Table. Employment in Blue Mountains LGA

The participation rate - the percentage of the population who are in the workforce or are wanting to be in the workforce – is 61% of the population.

Unemployment totals 2289 people or 6.8% of the workforce. Of those, 1698 are looking for full time work and 591 are looking for part time work. This rate of unemployment is less than the NSW average.

Weekly Income

Weekly Income	Blue Mountains	Blue Mountains (%)	NSW (%)
Negative/nil income	3590	7.0	0.8
\$1 - \$119	5061	9.8	0.7
\$120 - \$299	16409	31.8	17.7
\$300 - \$399	9287	18.0	15.6
\$500 - \$699	7266	14.1	12.6
\$700 - \$999	6688	12.9	15.0
\$1,000 - \$1,499	2474	4.8	14.5
\$1,500+	870	1.7	6.2
TOTAL	51645	100	100

Table. Weekly income of Blue Mountains residents

Commentary:

As can be seen in the above table, the income levels for the Blue Mountains indicate that there are significant differences between local and NSW averages namely:

- approximately half the community (49%) have weekly income less than \$299. This compares to 19% across NSW; and
- only 6.5% of the community have incomes greater than \$1,000 pw. This compares to 20.7% across NSW.

This means that the Blue Mountains can be regarded as having significantly less disposable income than the NSW average.

It is clear that the Blue Mountains would benefit from a population with higher disposable income. This would have the effect of increasing both the quantity and quality of retailing in the Blue Mountains, increasing the likelihood of more local expenditure within the Blue Mountains LGA. Further, the diversity of the community would be enhanced.

The mountains have a number of significant lifestyle attractions as well as being in reasonable proximity to the single largest market in Australia: the Sydney metropolitan area. The Blue Mountains has the opportunity to attract consultants, contractors and other high value workers who need to access the Sydney market on a regular basis, but who do not need to do this every day of the week. Such a group of people is likely to be attracted to the quality of life in the mountains and to contribute significantly to development of the mountains.

Educational Attainment

Educational Qualification	Number of People	%
Higher degree	1204	5.5%
Post-graduate diploma	1442	6.5%
Bachelor's degree	5438	24.7%
Under-graduate diploma	3008	13.7%
Associate diploma	2161	9.8%
Skilled vocational	6420	29.2%
Vocational (basic)	2345	10.7%
Total	22018	100%

Table. Educational attainment of Blue Mountains residents

Commentary:

Over half (52%) the people in the Blue Mountains aged 15 years or older have post school qualifications. Sixty percent (60 %) of those having these qualifications have either advanced vocational education qualifications or a bachelor's degree.

Industry in the Blue Mountains

Research by the Western Sydney Research Institute of Tax Department records indicate that there are 3769 private sector small businesses in the Blue Mountains. These are businesses that are defined to have a turnover of less than \$10 m. p.a. The four most important small business groups across the **Blue Mountains** LGA are:

➤ Property and Business services:	764 businesses;
➤ Construction:	716 businesses;
➤ Retail Trade:	367 businesses;
➤ Cultural and Recreational Services:	238 businesses;
Total:	2,085
% of All Small Businesses	55%
Total Number of Small Businesses	3,791

By comparison, the situation in the **Penrith LGA** is:

➤ Construction:	3,087 businesses;
➤ Property and Business Services:	1,886 businesses;
➤ Retail Trade:	1,221 businesses;
➤ Manufacturing:	881 businesses.
Total:	7,075
% of All Small Businesses:	59%
Total Number of Small Businesses:	11,992

The recent Katoomba retail study (1998) indicated that there was a significant leakage of retail business to Penrith. Given the strength of small business in Penrith, it is reasonable to conclude (and anecdotal evidence supports) that leakage to Penrith is an issue for all businesses in the Mountains. ABS data gives a fuller picture of BMLGA industry:

Industry	Total Persons	Percentage of Persons (%)
Education	4238	13.5%
Health & Community Services	4058	12.9%
Property & Business Services	2941	9.4%
Manufacturing	2606	8.3%
Accommodation, Restaurants, Cafes	2050	6.5%
Construction	2016	6.4%
Government Administration & Defence	1838	5.9%
Personal and Other Services	1404	4.5%
Wholesale Trade	1380	4.4%
Transport & Storage	1216	3.9%
Finance & Insurance	1190	3.8%
Cultural & Recreational Services	778	2.5%
Communication Services	597	1.9%
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	357	1.1%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	173	0.6%
Mining	176	0.6%
Non-classifiable Economic Units	276	0.9%
Not stated	448	1.4%
TOTAL	31396	100%

Table. Employment by Industry in the Blue Mountains

Commentary:

Health and Community Services and Education are the largest industries in the Blue Mountains LGA. Both these groups are a mixture of government and private sector employers.

The Tourism industry is a significant employer in the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains Tourism Authority estimates that there are in excess of 3 million visitors a year to the Mountains with the consequent economic benefit. An analysis by the Western Sydney Research Institute (Sept 1998) indicates that 13% of all employment in the LGA relates to tourism. The bulk of these employees (70%) is the upper Blue Mountains, from Wentworth Falls to Blackheath. Accommodation takings across the LGA amounted to \$24.8 million in the 1996-97m financial year from 1122 guest rooms. At that time, however, the room occupancy rate was only 51.8% and bed occupancy rate 38.3%. Anecdotal evidence indicates that, while there is a high demand for accommodation during the weekends, demand during the week is relatively poor in comparison.

The Katoomba Charrette planning process also revealed that, despite the very large numbers of tourists that come to the Blue Mountains, only a small percentage actually stop in the Katoomba retail centre. Given the huge numbers of people involved, even a small increase in the numbers of tourists stopping in Katoomba, or in other towns across the Mountains, would have the effect of turning a marginal business into a profitable one or turning existing adequate businesses into really good ones. Such an effect is also likely to increase internal consumption by Blue Mountains residents through the provision of a greater diversity of retail goods and services and possibly with a greater quality of goods and services. The Katoomba Retail Study also suggested that there was room for another supermarket in town as well as more restaurants, cafes etc.

Value of Goods and Services Produced in the Blue Mountains

Local Government Area	Value of Goods and Services Produced
Blue Mountains	\$10.4 million
Western Sydney	\$28.5 million
Fairfield	\$16.5 million
Liverpool	\$23.5 million
Penrith	\$14.8 million

Table. Value of Goods and Services Produced per 1,000 population

Commentary:

It is clear that the Blue Mountains economy is fundamentally different from those in surrounding areas. The relatively low value of goods and services produced suggests that there is a need for further study into this situation and for development of options to increase the current value of goods and services provided.

Employment Destinations

Based on NSW Department of Transport figures, the five most popular destinations of workers in the Blue Mountains were:

- Blue Mountains: 42%
- Penrith: 17%
- Blacktown: 6%
- Parramatta: 5%
- Other: 25%
- Sydney CBD: 5%

Fifty eight per cent (58%) of workers needed to travel outside the Blue Mountains Local Government Area to work.

Employment Centres

Katoomba, with 2,404 workers, is the largest employment centre in the Blue Mountains. Seventeen per cent (17%) of the LGA workforce are employed in the town. Katoomba has approximately 30% of the LGA's workers in finance and insurance, accommodation, cafes and restaurants, communication services and cultural and recreation services.

Commentary:

It would appear that there is an opportunity to spread the workforce better across the Blue Mountains. Given the significance of tourism as an industry in the upper mountains, there may also be an opportunity to develop this industry better across the mountains with the subsequent impact on location of employment.

Other Relevant Research into Economic Development

Two major sources of data have been identified that contain useful analyses of economic development opportunities in the Blue Mountains LGA:

- The economic development study undertaken by Dench McLean into economic development opportunities for Central Western NSW; and
- The economic development report which came out of the Katoomba Charrette.

The Dench McCle an report identified three major strategies to increase economic performance in the region:

- Use existing resource base to build growth;
- Focus priorities on key catalyst industries to expedite development; and

- Use the collective strengths of regional decision makers to facilitate progress.

In regard to these strategies, particular sub-strategies were suggested:

- Use existing resource base to build growth;
- Add value to existing enterprises;
- Look within to gain supply and knowledge; and
- Know and manage your key resources.

Focus priorities on key catalyst industries to expedite development:

- Build on areas where you have advantage;
- Market your skills inside and out; and
- Do fewer things and do them better.

Use the collective strengths of the regional decision makers to facilitate progress

- Only through working together will success be achieved;
- You need critical mass to compete in the marketplace;
- Work closely with neighbours for mutual rewards.

On the basis of the above strategies, Dench McClean identified a number of industries for action. These include mining; agriculture (horticulture, traditional broad acre farming and forestry); agriculture-viticulture; manufacturing; transport and infrastructure; tourism; education and training. While the industries in the two regions differ, the general principles underlying the approach have much to commend them. As a result, the principles suggest that the industries of tourism, education, health and community services and personal services are the most likely for action.

The **Katoomba Charrette** also produced some issues that require resolution for the economic development of the Katoomba area:

- **Employment issues that need to be addressed:**
 - ❖ A need to diversify the economy;
 - ❖ A need to produce and supply higher value goods and services;
 - ❖ A need to improve access to degree qualifications, which would also prevent the loss of young people from the area;
 - ❖ A need to develop local skills to enable Katoomba to more fully participate in growth sectors;
 - ❖ A need to maximise commercial opportunities available to craft industries;
 - ❖ A need to maximise opportunities for service sector business specialists;

- ❖ A need to support start-up of new enterprises.
- **Tourism and retail issues that need to be addressed:**
 - ❖ A need to capture more of the Free Independent Traveller (FIT) market. In particular there is a need to address the specific needs of young FITS (19-35 years old) and older FITS (empty nesters and singles);
 - ❖ A need to diversify retail product mix to capture more visitor dollars;
 - ❖ A need to capitalise on family tourist and family day tripper repeat visits;
 - ❖ A need to take more advantage of the coach tour visitor market;
 - ❖ A need to develop a professionally managed public gallery;
 - ❖ A need to improve the presentation of Katoomba St and its buildings;
 - ❖ A need to improve the quality of personal and business services;
 - ❖ A need to develop better small business hospitality skills;
 - ❖ A need to raise public awareness that everyone in the mountains can assist the tourism industry;
 - ❖ A need to maximise retail profitability from extended trading hours;
 - ❖ A need to develop a plan for a tourist retail precinct; and
 - ❖ A need to plan for further tourism driven retail expansion.

Commentary:

While the above issues are related specifically to the Katoomba Charrette, and are likely to be acted on by Council, there are clear lessons for the rest of the mountains in the suggestions that have been made.

Summary

As has been indicated elsewhere in this document, there is a number of significant issues that impact on economic growth and employment in the Blue Mountains.

Population growth is relatively stable at 4.4% (1991-1996). Because of the geography of the Mountains and the limited sites available for further housing development, it is likely that any significant changes to population patterns will come as a result of urban consolidation rather than expansion into new "greenfield" areas. These limits to population also mean that there is not going to be a significant change to retailing as a result of a strongly growing population, as has been the case in other geographic areas.

In regard to the age structure of the mountains, the fact that there appear to be fewer in average in the 20-24 and 25-34 age groups requires further investigation. Given the fact that real estate in the mountains is significantly less expensive than many

Sydney suburbs, it does not appear to be a cost of housing issue. There are a couple of possible explanations for this situation. The first is that, in the 20-24 age group, this can often be period of completing a university education. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students often move away from home for these last years for a variety of reasons: closeness to university facilities, a desire to live in the inner city etc. This is also the age where younger people choose to leave the parental home for a variety of other reasons. The second possible explanation is that there is a lack of local work opportunity. As was noted earlier, there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that people go to further afield for the start of their career and then move back to the mountains to raise a family etc in the 35+ age group.

Action:

There is a need to undertake research into why there is less than average in the 20-24 and 25-34 age groups. Once this has been done, then strategies can be developed for encouraging local employment and training opportunity for this group, if required.

The weekly income information for the mountains indicates that there are significant issues for consideration. There is a need to attract people with higher disposable incomes to live in the mountains. As is noted later in this discussion, the Blue Mountains LGA is well positioned for those people who can work from home but need access to the largest single market in Australia: the Sydney metropolitan area. The attraction of people with higher disposable incomes to the mountains is essentially about attracting those people who have the option of living anywhere. High value consultants, contractors and niche companies would have a significant impact on the retail and entertainment industries in the mountains. Such people would also have the ability to work with existing small businesses in customer/supplier relationships and to form strategic alliances for marketing purposes. They would also increase the viability of existing retail businesses and also possibly encourage a variety of new retail businesses to start up with a focus on the top end of the market. This focus could also have a good fit with the requirements of tourism for a more diversified retailing experience. There is a clear need to consider this opportunity and to develop appropriate actions.

Action:

There is a need to undertake research into how the Blue Mountains could be sold to individuals with higher disposable incomes as a place of residence. A strategy for attracting these people could then be developed and implemented.

In regard to educational qualifications, the evidence is quite clear that the Blue Mountains LGA has a real educational depth. This means that for employers moving to the mountains, there is the opportunity to recruit locally with confidence that there is someone living in the local community that is likely to be well qualified for a particular position. This is supported by anecdotal evidence gathered during the various recruitment actions that Council undertakes on a regular basis (Council being one the very largest employers in the Mountains). This information, together with other relevant statistics, could be incorporated into an information package aimed at

attracting new businesses to the mountains or encouraging existing businesses to expand.

Action:

There is a need to develop an information package aimed at attracting new businesses to the Blue Mountains. Some research is needed to determine the exact information requirements of business and to develop a well researched and attractive information package to meet these needs.

ABS figures indicate that there are only 32 business in the LGA with 50 employees or more, out of a total number of 2,636 businesses. Given the geography of the Blue Mountains, it is unlikely that this situation will change appreciably. There is little in the way of “green-field” land available for significant new developments: at this stage, the best scenario in this regard would be redevelopments of one sort or another on existing sites.

Action:

There is a need to identify sites through the Blue Mountains that might be suitable for development and redevelopment and to promote those sites to business.

As a result of the above situation, for significant economic development to occur, small business development is the most likely type. Again, because of shortages of industrial land and office accommodation, it is most likely that these businesses would operate from home. These businesses have a minimal effect on the local environment, suggesting that they are sustainable over the medium to long term in regard to parking, noise, pollution, water run-off etc. There may also be a need to be more flexible about what constitutes a small business, so that businesses operating from home with, say, 2 equivalent employees do not require Council planning approval.

Action:

There is a need to develop policies to encourage small businesses to move to the Blue Mountains and to encourage local residents to start small businesses. There is a need to review Council planning mechanisms to make them more flexible and responsive to the needs of small businesses operating from home.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are a significant number of small businesses operating from homes throughout the mountains. There is currently little available in the way of information about the nature of these businesses. Given the nature of home businesses, these are not the sorts of businesses that are represented in local chambers of business or other employer organisations. It is highly likely that improved customer/supplier relationships could be formed between small businesses in the local area, increasing the viability and performance of those businesses. Further, it is also possible that strategic business alliances/partnerships could be developed which would have the effect of making small businesses more competitive in a larger market (ie. Metropolitan Sydney).

Action:

There is a need to undertake research into what small businesses are in fact operating in the Mountains.

There is a need to encourage home based businesses to participate in local business organisations.

There is a need to encourage local small businesses to work more closely together, either in customer/supplier relationships or as strategic allies/partners.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that businesses across the Mountains do not interact on a regular basis. There is currently no single chamber of commerce, however, the recently formed BIZNET (Blue Mountains Business Network) is operating across the Mountains. A move towards a single Chamber of Commerce or the successful operation of BIZNET would increase communication between businesses across the Mountains. As with small businesses operating from home, there are undoubtedly opportunities for businesses to come together to offer a package of goods and services for customers. Recent developments in regard to the creation of the new Tourism authority again reinforce the need for packaging and better customer/supplier relationships between businesses.

Action:

There is a need to investigate how the separate business organisations across the mountains can be further integrated to take better advantage of packaging goods and services and creating customer/supplier relationships.

The Katoomba retail study indicates that leakage to other LGAs is an issue for retail businesses in the Blue Mountains and anecdotal evidence suggests that this is also an issue for all small businesses in the Blue Mountains. There is a clear need to increase consumption of local goods and services.

Action:

There is a need to investigate how consumption of local goods and services could be encouraged.

The data for the tourism sector also indicates that there is a need to further develop this market. The Blue Mountains Tourist Authority is active in promoting the area and is moving towards better packaging of goods and services to make the area more attractive to tourists. The appointment of a special events/conference co-ordinator should have the effect of increasing the mid week market, something vital when considering the average occupancy rates for accommodation in the Mountains. Additionally, anecdotal evidence indicates that the tourism operators are not stopping coaches in Blue Mountains towns for visits to retail outlets. There is a need to explore why this is the case and to put in place strategies to develop retail attractors that better meet the needs of the tourism industry. As was noted earlier, a significant

proportion of tourism activity is in the upper mountains and there is a need to consider how this might be extended to other areas of the mountains.

Action:

There is a need to investigate how retailing can be improved in the Blue Mountains to better meet the needs of the Tourism industry.

There is a need to investigate how the benefits of the tourism industry can be spread to more towns across the mountains

There is a need to investigate how the Blue Mountains being the inaugural City of the Arts can be promoted as a cultural destination to increase tourism.

There are a number of issues that have been identified in the Katoomba Charrette that impose significant challenges. In broad terms, there are two strands to the analysis:

- The need to address employment issues; and
- The need to address tourism and retail issues.

For the most part, most of the issues in regard to tourism and retailing have already been discussed in this document. However, the report does raise the issue of the need to improve the quality of personal and business services and to better develop small business hospitality skills. This is, in fact, a training issue. While this sort of training is available locally (eg through Mission Employment), there seems to be an issue of ensuring that local business actually recognises that this is an issue that needs to be dealt with. It would seem appropriate for Council to work with the business community to promote knowledge of this training in local businesses. It would also seem appropriate that Council encourage some sort of business awards scheme, again in co-operation with local business organisations, to highlight the quality of service and the training that is undertaken by local businesses.

Action:

There is a need for Council to work with service providers and the business community in promoting training opportunity and excellence across Blue Mountains businesses.

There is a need for Council to work with the business community to recognise and reward quality of service in local businesses.

The Charrette also noted a need for the support of start-up enterprises. At the moment, the business support needs of the local community are met in a variety of ways including:

- the provision of training through the New Industry Extension Scheme (NIES) which is run through Mission Employment;
- the availability of training and business development through the Penrith Business Enterprise Centre. The BEC currently has all the business it needs, but informal discussions have indicated a willingness to provide training in the mountains if there is a sufficient demand for it;

- the availability of a wide variety of goods and services through business organisations such as the local chamber of commerce, Australian Business Limited and so forth.

While there is anecdotal evidence to support this view, there is a need to really understand what the needs of the marketplace are, to encourage providers to access this information and then to encourage the use of the information on a day to day basis.

Action:

There is a need to investigate the training needs of businesses in the Blue Mountains

There is a need to investigate how training might be best delivered to meet the needs of business in co-operation with business.

There is a need to determine if there is sufficient demand for a BEC being established in the Blue Mountains.

A study into the viability of a business incubator in the Blue Mountains is currently being undertaken for GROW Blue Mountains. The outputs of the Charrette also indicated that there was a need for a business incubator. At this stage, it is difficult to know if an incubator is really required. One of the other possibilities, currently being trailed in central western NSW is the development of an incubator without walls, which works on the providing support via the Internet.

Action:

There is a need to investigate whether a business incubator, or incubator services, are required in the mountains.

There is a need to determine the best way of delivering business incubation services to small business in the mountains.

In regard to the training issue, the Charrette also suggested a need to improve access of young people to tertiary education at the local level. TAFE education, depending on the course required, is available either at Wentworth Falls or at the Werrington campus. The University of Western Sydney also provides courses at its Kingswood and Windsor campuses. Economic development research from overseas indicates that having a tertiary education institution, and a university in particular, has the ability to attract high net worth individuals into a local area.

Action:

There is a need to develop a marketing and media plan to sell the idea of a tertiary education site on the Blue Mountains to universities.

Finally Council must take a leadership role in promoting economic development in the Blue Mountains until such time there is sufficient momentum established for an independent board or similar organisation created to maintain the growth and further increase the economic development within the LGA.