



BCCI 2015 Member Survey: Report on findings

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Part 1: Executive Summary

About the survey

- The 2015 member survey sought feedback in three broad areas:
 - member participation
 - member satisfaction
 - strategic priorities.
- The survey comprised 22 questions, with a mix of multiple choice and free text responses.
- 43 members completed the survey, representing about 30% of total membership.
 - A 30% response rate is generally regarded as providing a statistically valid sample.

Survey findings

a) Member satisfaction

- Overall the survey indicates that members are generally satisfied with BCCI services and see value in their membership:
 - 58% of respondents have been members of BCCI for more than 5 years
 - 26% have been members for 2—5 years
 - 86% plan to renew their membership in 2015-16.
- The primary reasons respondents joined BCCI were:
 - networking opportunities
 - advertising discount in the Bungendore business directory, and
 - an opportunity to provide input on local issues.
- 63% of respondents believe BCCI provides an effective forum for local businesses.
- 79% believe BCCI keeps them well informed.
- While these figures are encouraging, survey data also shows there is plenty of room for improvement, particularly in regard to member participation, opportunities for networking, and communication.

b) Member participation

- 77% of respondents rarely or never attend monthly general meetings.
 - The primary reason given for non-attendance was a lack of time or a timing clash.
 - Suggestions for improving attendance included ensuring a wider representation of businesses and giving members more opportunities to shape meeting agendas.

- While these ideas are positive, it is likely that time constraints will always limit monthly meeting attendance.
- Only 15% of respondents had suggestions for monthly guest speakers (perhaps not surprising given the difficulty in attending general meetings).
 - The most common suggestion for guest speakers were Councillors and town planners. (This may reflect an interest in planning and development issues, which was a common theme throughout the survey.)

c) Member services

- A common theme emerging via free comments was a desire for different types of networking opportunities, in addition to monthly meetings, so that members can interact, learn about each other's businesses, and share concerns and ideas.
- 67% of respondents indicated they would like BCCI to offer business development and training.
 - The most commonly suggested topics for training were marketing and general business management skills.
- 82% of respondents prefer to receive communication by email.
 - This is in line with our current approach, however 36% said they would prefer a regular newsletter, and this may be something to consider for the future.
- 70% believe the BCCI website is useful but improvements can be made.
 - Feedback indicates a need to review and update the website's appearance and structure, and ensure content is easy to find, relevant and kept up to date.
- Only 38% of respondents make use of free advertising on the BCCI website.

d) Strategic issues and priorities

- When asked to nominate primary focus areas for BCCI, respondents indicated the following preferences:
 - promoting the local region – 72%
 - marketing local businesses – 69%
 - business retention and growth – 51%
 - development and planning issues – 46%
 - business networking – 38%
 - business skills development – 26%
- Issues of most concern to members include:
 - Local planning and development – 28%
 - Economic growth and development – 21%
 - Council decisions and operations – 21%.

- On the issue of how BCCI can best promote business retention and growth:
 - 41% suggested providing a forum for business liaison and networking
 - 32% suggested BCCI work with Council on planning and development issues
 - 57% believe BCCI should work more closely with Palerang Council overall.
- Suggestions for ways BCCI can assist with business marketing include:
 - features and profiles on member businesses published via the website or local paper
 - considering social media as part of BCCI's communication mix.

e) Key themes

- Common themes emerging via comments provided throughout the survey were:
 - the desire to build an inclusive and supportive member culture in which all businesses are equal participants
 - improved member consultation and liaison
 - more networking opportunities outside monthly meetings
 - improved communication, particularly through a revised and updated website
 - maintaining a cooperative relationship with Council and providing input on those issues which affect local businesses, especially planning and development issues
 - the need for coordinated marketing of our region and our businesses to attract visitors and to ensure our locals 'keep it local'.
- Many other ideas and suggestions were offered via free text comments throughout the survey (eg: updating the BCCI logo, establishing a telephone contact list so members can call someone to discuss issues). It will take time to work through all these suggestions.
 - While this adds to the complexity of survey analysis, it was important to give members an opportunity to comment freely in the first comprehensive member survey for several years.

Part 2: Detailed Report

Background and Purpose

In 2014-15, the Bungendore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) began drafting a new Strategic Plan. To ensure the plan captured the views and priorities of members, a survey of all members was conducted in July 2015.

This document presents an analysis of the survey data, reporting general findings and trends against each question, and where necessary correlating these against related questions. A close analysis of free text comments was also undertaken for each question, to provide depth to quantitative data. Finally all free text responses were analysed as a whole to identify key themes, views and concerns.

Methodology

The aim of the survey was to collect data on member participation, levels of satisfaction with BCCI member services, and to identify member concerns and priorities. The survey was drafted with the input and guidance of the 2014-15 Executive Committee. The final approved survey comprised 22 optional questions with a mix of multiple choice and free text responses. This mix was designed to balance the need for quantitative data gathering and measurement, with the desire to provide freedom and scope for members to present a broad range of views.

Delivery

A number of online survey tools were researched. Survey Monkey was ultimately selected for its usability, extensive survey administration and data analysis tools, and its overall value for money. A Survey Monkey Basic Business Plan was purchased at a total cost of \$75.85 for three months.

The 2015 Member Survey was administered over three weeks from Wednesday 8 July to Friday 31 July 2015. It was communicated to members via direct email and promoted through the BCCI website and the Bungendore Mirror. In each week that the survey remained open, a reminder email was sent to those members who had not yet responded.

Response Rate

Forty-three members responded to the survey, representing about 30 per cent of total BCCI membership. While the overall number of responses is small, a 30 per cent response rate is generally regarded as providing a statistically valid sample.

The broad range of respondents/business types who participated in the survey (Q1), is an additional reason to believe survey results are likely to be broadly representative of overall member views. Nevertheless, when analysing results it is important to note:

- as survey questions were optional not all 43 respondents answered every question. In particular, questions which called for free text responses only, tended to have a significantly lower response rate (between a minimum of 14 and a maximum of 28 responses.)
- several questions allowed more than one response to be chosen. This means that percentage responses for these questions will usually add to more than 100% of the total number of respondents.

Wherever clarification of response rates is needed, all data for a particular question should be referenced (total respondents, total responses per question, and whether multiple responses were allowed).

However, given that not all respondents completed every question (as all questions were optional), caution should be exercised when extrapolating survey results to all BCCI members. To verify specific findings, further canvassing of member views may be warranted and could be achieved via follow up questionnaires, interviews or focus groups.

Key Findings

Part 1. Demographics, participation and service preferences

Business type (Q1)

The 43 respondents represent a broad variety of members and businesses (Q1). The vast majority of respondents (74%) identified in three categories: professional services (37%), trade services (23%) and retail (14%). The remaining 26% of respondents identified across a range of other business types including hospitality, primary production, transport, real estate, art (gallery) and energy.

This broad mix of respondents would appear to be in line with the BCCI's overall member profile. This could be verified by analysing the BCCI member list and comparing it to survey demographics.

Membership (Q2-Q5)

A majority of respondents (58%) have been BCCI members for more than five years (Q2). 26% have been members for between two and five years. Only 13% of respondents have been members for less than two years. These figures suggest high degree of member loyalty, which is confirmed in the high number of respondents (86%) who plan to renew their membership in 2015-16 (Q4).

The main reasons respondents joined BCCI (Q3) were to receive a discount in the Bungendore Business Directory (58%) and for networking opportunities (58%). The opportunity to provide input on local issues was also seen as important (40%).

Three of the seven respondents who provided comments on this question also cited belonging to, and networking with, the local business community as their primary motivation for joining BCCI. When these comments are factored in, the opportunity to network becomes the primary reason most members join BCCI and suggests the importance of providing networking opportunities to members – a theme repeated in a number of comments throughout the survey – especially in light of the fact that a majority of members do not attend monthly meetings due to time constraints (see Q6 below).

Of the three respondents who said they would not be renewing membership (Q5), one said this was because it is too costly, one stated they didn't see any benefits in being a member, and one commented that there were difficulties in making payments and getting an accurate price on Business Directory advertising. The latter also stated there was not enough engagement with local businesses.

Meeting attendance (Q6-Q7)

While membership is valued, 77% of respondents rarely or never attend BCCI monthly general meetings (Q6). The survey did not ask the reason for non-attendance directly but instead asked what BCCI could do to attract greater attendance (Q7). Nevertheless, many respondents used the comment field to explain their non-attendance. The overwhelming reason, cited by 31% of respondents via free comments, is a lack of time or a timing clash. Two respondents cited the venue as a reason for non-attendance, disliking hotels and cafés/restaurants as meeting venues.

In describing what BCCI could do to attract greater attendance at monthly meetings, 29% of respondents suggested having a greater mix of businesses in attendance, 14% suggested giving members a greater opportunity to raise key issues and shape meeting agendas, and 5% suggested providing refreshments.

One free text response cited a need for 'enthusiasm, authenticity, honesty transparency and genuine support for all businesses' at monthly meetings. While this is only one comment, representing one member's view, when considered in conjunction with later comments on BCCI culture, it suggests some members may perceive BCCI as divided and not representative of all businesses. It may be worthwhile testing this perception further through informal discussions/interviews to determine whether BCCI should invest in culture building and positive outreach/PR to members, to build a greater sense of cohesion and inclusion.

Service preferences (Q8-Q10)

The survey included a question on guest speakers at BCCI meetings (Q8). An overwhelming majority of respondents (85%) said they did not have any suggestions for guest speakers. Of the 15% who did, almost half suggested Councillors or Town Planners from Palerang Council and two respondents made particular reference to hearing more about parking and development issues in Bungendore CBD. This is in line with free text responses to later questions in which concern about planning and development emerges as a common theme.

Other suggestions for guest speakers included people involved with the local community and local projects, motivational speakers, and representatives from Canberra and Queanbeyan businesses to help promote links and visitation across the regions.

A majority of respondents (67%) indicated they would like BCCI to offer business development and training courses (Q9). A third of respondents provided suggestions for course topics and overwhelmingly indicated a desire for courses/training on marketing (50% of comments) and general business management (36% of comments). Other suggestions included linking to and promoting training offered by others (eg: national and state business organisations) and learning about initiatives adopted in other towns/regions.

When asked about BCCI communication (Q10), preferred options were:

- email (82%)
- regular newsletter (36%)
- BCCI website (26%)
- meetings (18%)
- local paper (10%)

One respondent also suggested BCCI consider using social media in addition to current communication channels – a suggestion that was repeated in later comments.

These results indicate that BCCI's approach to communication is broadly in line with member preferences, as the current primary communication channels are direct emails to members and the BCCI website. However, responses also suggest that tweaks and improvements can be made. For example, consideration could be given to establishing a regular email newsletter and to improving the BCCI website. The value of improving the website is further supported by responses to Q21 which indicate members would like to see the BCCI website revised and more consistently managed to ensure it remains an attractive and viable form of communication to members and the broader community.

Part 2: Strategic issues and priorities

BCCI focus and key initiatives (Q11 and Q13)

When asked to identify primary focus areas for BCCI (Q11) respondents prioritised the given options as follows:

- promoting the local region (72%)
- marketing local businesses (69%)
- business retention and growth (51%)
- development and planning issues (46%)
- business networking (38%)
- business skills development (26%).

Four respondents suggested alternative priorities via the comments field including advocating on behalf of all businesses regardless of their nature, liaising with all businesses, and BCCI only contributing to an issue when it impacts local businesses. This suggests that not only is it important that BCCI pursue prioritise issues that are of interest, relevance and impact for local businesses but also the importance of communicating to members how and why these issues affect them, so that members understand where and why BCCI time and effort is invested.

These results correlate to later answers (Q13) when respondents were asked to identify specific initiatives they would like the Chamber to pursue in 2015-16. Of the 21 respondents who identified initiatives, 30% referenced marketing, either of the region or locally, 21% identified liaising and working with Palerang Council, particularly on planning and development issues, and 21% identified business development and networking. The remaining comments (28%) identified a range of other initiatives including local WiFi, ensuring representation for all businesses, and differentiating the region from others (which could be considered a marketing priority).

Issues of concern to members (Q12-15)

When asked to identify the issues of most concern to them as business owners (Q12), 28 respondents provided comments, which were analysed to identify common themes. The theme most frequently touched on was local planning and development (28%), followed by economic development and growth (21%), and the operations of Palerang Council (18%). Business development and networking, town character and amenity were also identified (11% respectively).

Concerns with planning and development, economic growth and Council operations correlate with responses to the question: should BCCI work more closely with Palerang Council? A majority of respondents, 57%, said yes. 24% said no. 19% were unsure.

When suggesting how BCCI could assist with local business retention and expansion (Q15), similar priorities and concerns emerged. Twenty-two respondents answered this question and the major theme identified was the need for BCCI to act as a forum for business liaison, interaction and networking (41%). The next most common theme identified was the need for BCCI to advocate on planning and development issues and work with Palerang Council (32%). Other concerns included marketing/promotion of the region, economic development and growth, and BCCI's role as an advocate and advisor to local businesses, especially new businesses.

Overall, responses to this section of the survey indicate a series of common concerns and priorities: planning and development, relations with Palerang Council, business networking and liaison, growth and development of the region. Survey responses indicate that members see a valuable role for BCCI in all these issues, as and when they particularly affect local businesses.

Marketing (Q16-Q17)

When asked whether BCCI should use its funds to promote/market local businesses, an overwhelming majority of respondents (94%) said yes. A number of comments provided the caveat that this marketing should be general or 'as a whole' – in other words promoting the region and businesses in totality, rather than promoting individual businesses or business groups.

A wide variety of suggestions were provided in response to the question: can you suggest ways BCCI could help to promote/market your business? (Q17) Common themes were promotion via the BCCI website, the local paper and through features or profiles of member business (that could be published via the website and paper). Other suggestions included social media, improving town amenity and visitor experiences (eg; through better signage, providing networking opportunities and encouraging residents to shop locally). Two respondents again indicated they did not see it as BCCI's role to market individual member businesses.

Part 3: Member Satisfaction

BCCI as a business forum (Q18)

While a majority of respondents (63%) agreed that BCCI provides an effective forum for local businesses, a fairly high proportion thought it did not (37%). Comments provided indicate a range of concerns including a lack of opportunities to participate outside monthly meetings, the need to ensure all businesses are represented and able to participate, and a desire for members to work cooperatively and inclusively. Some respondents indicate they have experienced divisions and disagreements in the past and stress the need for unity and cohesion.

Communication and promotion (Q19-Q21)

A majority of respondents (79%) think that BCCI keeps them well-informed with around a fifth (21%) saying it does not. Comments highlighted a range of issues as barriers to keeping informed, including the lack of opportunity to network outside monthly meetings and the lack of time to attend meetings and read emails. One respondent noted that many decisions seem to be made at executive committee level without member discussion.

When asked if the BCCI website is a useful communication tool (Q21), 70% of respondents said yes but around 30% said no. Comments provided indicate the website is under-utilised for a range of reasons including lack of awareness, out of date information and a general perception that it could be improved to provide better content and better business promotion.

Given the identified need to improve the BCCI website it is perhaps not surprising that only 38% of respondents make use of free advertising on the BCCI website (Q20). While a majority of respondents (62%) said they do not advertise on the website, information provided via comments suggest some members intend to but 'haven't got round to it yet'.

Final comments (Q22)

The final survey question (Q22) gave respondents an opportunity to comment freely on any issue. Fourteen respondents commented, with a broad range of views and suggestions – some of which align to themes and comments provided under previous questions. They included a desire for a more supportive, inclusive member culture, the need for greater consultation and more networking opportunities in addition to monthly meetings, improved face-to-face and telephone communication, utilising social media, and updating the BCCI logo. Several comments expressed appreciation for the work of the committee, the good work being done and for the opportunity to provide feedback via the survey.

Conclusion

The 2105 BCCI member survey shows that:

- Overall members appear generally satisfied with BCCI services but improvements can be made across a range of areas including increased networking opportunities, strengthening member culture, and improved communication.
- Common member priorities and concerns include marketing of local business and the region, economic growth, planning and development. These concerns can be addressed through Chamber initiatives, many of which are already in development such as the new Marketing Plan and plans for closer cooperation with Palerang Council.

- In addition to the findings and themes identified in this report, there is a wealth of additional information and ideas provided in survey responses. Further analysis may be worthwhile to identify and guide the development of detailed initiatives of benefit to members.
- While the survey response rate and range of respondent business types suggest that survey results can be regarded as broadly representative of overall BCCI membership, it may be worthwhile conducting further research – via supplementary questionnaires, interviews or focus groups – to clarify findings on particular issues.