

# OBERON Business Association Inc.

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 OBERON COUNCIL  
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The General Manager  
 Oberon Council  
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 OBERON NSW 2787

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**RE: 2011 COUNTRY & REGIONAL LIVING EXPO**

Dear Leanne,

The Association felt it important to write to Council to provide an update in relation to the 2011 Expo.

As you might be aware, the Expo ran for three days between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of August at Rosehill Racecourse. Oberon's stand at the Expo was erected and manned by local volunteers throughout the entire weekend. Saturday, and especially Sunday, saw huge crowds attend the Expo and Oberon's stand certainly attracted much more than it's fair share of visitors as gauged by regular review of other areas in relation to Oberon. You would be aware we had lost our prime position however we were lucky to secure an additional site to promote commercial opportunities and land giving us a double stand.

Visitors to the stand were asked to provide their contact details and we were pleased to have approximately 150 families take the time to register with us. The Expo organisers had arranged a card system which proved of some value although not all attendees appeared to have cards. We have compiled all of this data into Excel format and will use the information to follow up those people. A separate report will be provided later in the year.

Due to the huge rush of people to the stand at certain times throughout the weekend we were unable to obtain everybody's contact details and as such we would expect the true number of people who showed interest in Oberon to be much greater.

It quickly became evident when meeting visitors to our stand that the four issues they were interested in were:

1. employment prospects;
2. costs of living / real estate;
3. education opportunities for their children; and
4. community facilities and infrastructure.

All of our members who were involved with the Expo felt that it was most definitely a worthwhile exercise for both the Association and Oberon to be involved in.

### **Fund Raising**

The Association initially agreed to provide a contribution of \$3,000.00 towards the costs of the Expo, to be used should there be a shortfall with our fundraising efforts. We received confirmation from the Oberon Plateau Tourism Association (OPTA) that they had passed a similar resolution to contribute a further \$3,000.00 if required.

We then appealed to our members and were overwhelmed to receive a total of \$5,950.00 in donations.

Of course in addition to the above, Council also donated \$5,000.00. So, leading up to the Expo, we had total funds of \$10,950.00, with the availability of a further \$6,000.00 promised from OBA and OPTA if needed.

The Association feels that the support received from the community by donating money and time is a real indication of the level of support the community has for the Expo. To see some of our members donating substantial sums of money during these uncertain economic times is testament to their belief in the benefits that attending the Expo brings to Oberon.

Special thanks must also go to the Oberon Men's Shed who spent almost an entire weekend packing 2500 sample bags. This was an enormous help.

### **Costs**

The most significant costs we incurred were:

- Hiring of the Expo site and furniture;
- Printing of the bags; and
- Contribution / advertising in the special Expo edition of the Oberon Review.

To date, our costs have totalled \$8,586.50.

The Association is planning to use some of the surplus funds to contact all of those people who registered an interest in Oberon and invite them to join us for a weekend in town so that we can provide them with more detailed information about our town and it's prospects. At this stage, we envisage that this will take place on the first weekend in November to coincide with Mayfield Garden's Spring open weekend and the Oberon Farmer's Markets.

## **Staffing**

As mentioned above, the stand was manned by volunteers throughout the weekend.

We tried to ensure that at least six people were in attendance at one time. However, this was not always possible and staffing levels were inadequate at times.

Without denigrating the skills of our volunteers in any way, we did feel it would have been advantageous to have a member of Council (either staff or Councillor) in attendance, along with a representative of industry who could provide further details about employment opportunities.

Our jobs board was of particular interest to many who visited our stand.

It would have also been beneficial to have a "supervisor" in attendance throughout the entire weekend to ensure that it all ran smoothly and to provide general assistance to the volunteers.

## **Recommendations for 2012 and beyond**

Our initial recommendation is that Oberon should definitely have a presence at the 2012 Expo. The people visiting the Expo have real plans to relocate out of Sydney and if our town is not represented there is a risk that these potential new members of our community could move elsewhere. We also feel the funds and support from Council should be clearly dedicated to this event.

We believe that it would be useful for some of the DVD/display material to be updated and to include an emphasis on employment / businesses; schools; our medical centre and hospital; our sporting facilities etc.

In addition, several fold-up display banners for use at this and other events would be a sound investment.

It is very interesting to note that a new and significant book, written following research into the effect of the Country & Regional Living Expo (formerly Country Week) by Prof John Connelly, records that of all areas of country and regional NSW people first think of moving to Oberon is ranked forth in the State. We are in the prime seat in this important endeavour to attract people from Sydney.

Our plans to invite people to visit Oberon during the first weekend in November will, we believe, prove successful. We would like to invite Council staff and Councillors to take part in this event.

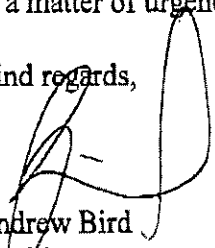
As can be seen from the above summary, the costs incurred were lower than in previous years. The obvious saving was with regard to staffing, but we were also careful to control other costs so that there were no surprises at the end.

Notwithstanding this, we believe that at least one representative of Council should be employed to oversee the weekend and provide the essential 'glue' to ensure essential elements (such as the need to record details of all interested people) are in place. We also feel it is preferred if Council staff and representatives of Council are also in attendance from time to time, in particular at the official ceremonies held during the Expo.

We also hope that Council will develop and provide encouragement relocation packages for people and businesses to consider Oberon as their preferred option, especially with the obvious benefits we can offer over other competing regions. These benefits include our proximity to Sydney, employment opportunities and support of a large centre such as Bathurst, town gas, a strong and committed workforce and affordable housing.

I hope that Council finds the above information useful. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss this matter further. We are keen to develop a plan for 2012 as a matter of urgency.

Kind regards,



Andrew Bird  
President  
Oberon Business Association