



Townsville Chamber of Commerce

Making Business Connections

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Editor

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To: www.townsvillebulletin.com.au

I read with some relief your article and editorial of 17 May 2010 regarding the benefit area levy. The Townsville Chamber of Commerce has been lobbying Council on behalf of CBD businesses since December 2009, to revoke the levy or at least re-consider its structure to eliminate the current imbalance.

Although the extra rate may have had merit when first imposed, small businesses and property owners are not benefiting from what is now seen as an impost during commercially challenging times.

The Chamber welcomes the confirmation that Council will discuss the levy during its 2010/2011 financial deliberations. If the motion is passed, it will be up to CBD property owners and their tenants to negotiate this new opportunity.

Several pieces of the CBD puzzle are finally falling into place: the construction work is progressing well; street parking, since the introduction of meters, is now available; and in spite of the difficulties, retailers, businesses and property owners remain mostly positive toward the redevelopment.

As your editorial pointed out, the new street won't engender a new CBD. Vibrant businesses will. There are over 200 businesses in the central business district of Townsville, including 33 fashion stores, 23 eateries, 21 specialty stores, 17 hair, health and beauty places and six home and giftware stores. The CBD offers a shopping experience different from shopping centres. A more personalised and exclusive one.

The Chamber submits that the thing most required when discussing the future of Townsville CBD is vision. The redevelopment project is more than a capital investment. The elimination of the benefit area levy will go some way to assist property owners to do more than 'wait and see'. So will the Retail Gap Analysis Council is currently conducting. Beyond those two important steps, the businesses of Townsville need to know Council's vision for their CBD and what will happen after March 2011, the scheduled opening date of the new Flinders Street.

JOHN CAREY
President
Townsville Chamber of Commerce