

# Community means Business

2322 Postcode Business Retention and  
Expansion Survey

Beresfield Hexham Tarro Thornton Woodberry



**Undertaken for  
the Growing  
2322 Working  
Group**



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Working Group**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## BACKGROUND

The 2322 Business Retention and Expansion Survey (BRES) was designed to:

- Identify business characteristics and needs in the main suburbs comprising the 2322 postcode area, and
- Explore business views about local social infrastructure and the potential for greater business-community links.

The project was undertaken by “*Growing 2322*”, a local community economic development project involving the Hunter Valley Youth Express Partnership Broker Program, the Australian Industry Group (AIG), the local high school (Francis Greenway HS), members of the local business community, and Newcastle and Maitland Councils. Funding assistance was provided by the NSW Department of Industry and Investment, the Berotarwood Project (funded by the Area Assistance Scheme) and local businesses.

*Growing 2322* engaged Strategy Hunter consultants to undertake the survey.

The locality embraced by the 2322 postcode includes five suburbs- Beresfield, Hexham, Tarro, Thornton and Woodberry. While Thornton is targeted for significant residential growth, the other suburbs are likely to face a stable or declining residential population over the coming decades. Beresfield, Hexham and Tarro have an older population profile than the Lower Hunter, while Thornton and Woodberry have a more youthful population.

Beresfield, Hexham, Tarro and Woodberry have significant levels of disadvantage as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABC) SEIFA scores.

## COMMERCIAL CENTRES

These socio economic characteristics have an impact on the economic vitality of the local commercial /town centres. The ageing population and relatively low incomes of Beresfield, Hexham, Tarro and Woodberry limit the business that can be drawn from the local residents. This is evident from the vacancy rate of shops at Beresfield. An increase in business in these commercial/town centres must to be driven by finding ways to increase local incomes, decreasing expenditure leakage to other areas (such as Green Hills), and attracting consumers from other areas. The existing catchment of these commercial areas is largely the surrounding suburb.

Thornton’s commercial businesses are faced with different circumstances. They have a more affluent and expanding local consumer base. However, they are also faced with competition from Green Hills and the limited space for the Thornton shopping centre to expand. It is likely that the new residential areas will result in another small shopping centre at Thornton, which may impact on the activity levels at the existing centre.

## INDUSTRIAL ESTATES

The light industrial areas at Hexham, Beresfield and Thornton have low vacancy rates and are benefiting from the growth of mining in the Upper Hunter. Many businesses are reliant on providing goods and services to the mining industry to at least some extent. Strategic planning by the Councils and the NSW Department of Planning indicates that these areas will continue to grow.

The BRES survey found that:

- Businesses regard 2322 as a very good place to conduct business. The main assets of the area are seen to be its access to the F3 and highway, being close to schools, sporting facilities, and its location in general.
- Most businesses are young, with around 70% having established since 1990.
- Most businesses are local, with less than 20% of businesses having relocated to 2322 from outside the Hunter Region. Manufacturing, retail, professional services, supply of parts and personal services are the main business activities.
- Business has a high level of satisfaction with the area's high level of access to roads, transport services, the airport and suppliers.
- Incentives for business, ranging from reduced rates and taxes to specialist grants, are seen by business as the best way to strengthen the local economy, followed by better roads and better shops.
- 38% of businesses sell goods and services to customers elsewhere in NSW, and the same percentage sell to elsewhere in Australia. 18% of businesses export overseas, and another 16% are interested in exporting but are not doing so already.
- The vast majority of businesses expect demand, turnover and profits to increase over the next two years. They expect employment to either stay the same or increase, particularly full time employees.
- Half of the respondent businesses are thinking of expanding in the next two years by increasing staff or floorspace, or both, to cater for increased demand. Few are considering relocation from the Hunter Region, or 2322 in particular.
- There has been little contact with agencies or business organisations to discuss expansion plans, although 8 businesses indicated they would be interested in discussing their plans with the NSW Department of Industry and Investment.
- Businesses describe the main constraints to expansion as finance and lack of skilled staff.
- Just under half of the businesses responding to the survey are experiencing recruitment difficulties, particularly with skilled trades. However, they report little difficulty in retaining employees.

- Just under 40% of businesses employ apprentices or trainees, and 28 businesses indicated an interest in employing apprentices or trainees. There was only moderate interest in partnerships to build stronger links between businesses, local schools and TAFE, however around 20 businesses indicated high to very high interest.
- Most co-operative activity between businesses is through referral of work.
- Respondents to the survey consider they have a moderate to very good level of business management skills. They would like this skill level to be excellent in 2 years. 39% of respondents would like to receive information and/or training to achieve this aspiration, with most preferring this to be delivered through business breakfasts or a newsletter.

## **ACTION AREAS**

- Improvements to the road system are seen the best way to improve the area. Businesses mentioned Weakley's Drive, the F3 roundabout and Thornton Road as needing upgrades.
- Other important areas for action included:
  - More shops and services in the town centres and area improvements
  - better public transport
  - improved access to the internet (some locations cannot obtain ADSL2)
- In relation to social infrastructure, businesses considered the widest gap between importance and satisfaction to be in the provision of, or access to:
  - Banking facilities
  - Public transport and cycleways to railway stations and
  - TAFE/training facilities
  - Police
  - A medical centre with a WorkCover and a rehabilitation focus, and
  - A postal drop box facility (industrial areas).

## Action List

No.	Issue	Response	Comment	Key stakeholders
1.	New customers need to be brought into the suburb centres to increase retail and service based economic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage financial institutions to locate in the town/commercial centres to meet the identified needs of industrial areas</li> <li>• Encourage destination shops, such as the haberdashery shop at Woodberry, which have a wide customer catchment.</li> </ul>	<p>Access to banking is a high need identified in the survey. The town centres are close to the industrial areas and offer easy parking.</p> <p>Access to finance was identified as an important impediment to business expansion. More local responsive financial institutions may improve the availability of finance.</p> <p>Destination shops have a wide spatial catchment and therefore attract a wider market.</p>	<p>Growing 2322</p> <p>Local business peak bodies. e.g. Chambers of Commerce Hunter Business Chamber Councils Department of Industry and Investment</p>
2.	Building existing businesses	Develop business database and targeted directory	It is importance to build awareness of what services are available locally.	Local business peak bodies Thornton Industrial Managers and Owners (TIMO)
3.	Road upgrades	<p>Upgrade Weakley's Drive, Thornton Road and the F3 roundabout.</p> <p>Improve the condition of local roads and drainage at Hexham.</p>	These roads were consistently identified as the most needed improvement in the area.	Councils RTA Local business peak bodies Hunter Business Chamber Regional Development Australia
4.	Availability of parking	Ensure town centres have adequate parking.	As Green Hills and other regional shopping competitors grow, parking will become less convenient. Ease of parking will become a comparative advantage for the local centres.	Councils Local business peak bodies Local businesses

No.	Issue	Response	Comment	Key stakeholders
5.	Policing	Increase police presence.	This is identified as a needed improvement to the area.	NSW Police Councils Local business peak bodies Interagency
6.	Post	Install post boxes in the Thornton, Holmwood and Freeway industrial areas.		Australia Post Local business peak bodies Industry peak bodies, e.g. Australian Industry Group (AIG)
7.	Internet	Ensure all premises have access to the internet to at least ADSL2 standard.  Investigate whether the area can be made an early priority for the National Broadband Network.	This is a basic service and is important for economic and social functioning.	NBN Telstra/Optus, etc. Hunter Business Chamber Councils Local business peak bodies Industry peak bodies
8.	Building skills	Develop a series of business breakfasts focussed on skills development and information about the area.	This could be linked to the building of networks. Start small and build up. The lowest skill rating was for work/life balance and this could form an initial focus for skills development.	Growing 2322 DET/Schools Local business peak bodies Councils Hunter Valley Youth Express Department of Industry and Investment TAFE
9.	Apprenticeships and trainees	Follow up with those businesses that showed interest in employing apprentices and trainees.	Use businesses that currently employ apprentices and trainees as champions and as examples of the benefits. Consider promoting group schemes.	Growing 2322 DET Industry peak bodies TAFE Group Training Organisations Department of Industry and Investment State Training Services

No.	Issue	Response	Comment	Key stakeholders
10.	Links and partnerships to schools and training institutions	Follow up with those businesses that showed interest in, or rated as high importance, such partnerships.	This will improve the ability of business to bridge employee supply gaps over the medium term. It will also assist the local community to gradually build its skill levels, and therefore increase residents' incomes. This will build local income and greater consumer buying power to support local shops and services.	Growing 2322 DET/Schools Interagency TAFE Hunter Valley Youth Express Industry peak bodies State Training Services Beacon Foundation
11.	Government support	Follow up with businesses showing interest in being contacted by the Dept of Industry and Investment regarding relocation and expansion.	There is a low rate of contact with Government agencies and business development organisations for advice and assistance.	Growing 2322 Department of Industry and Investment
12.	Networking	Build and support networks of businesses based on an initial small core and champions, and gradually build a participation base.	An initiative to build a network on the Thornton industrial area is an example of the network that could be supported.	Growing 2322 Local business peak bodies Hunter Valley Youth Express Hunter Business Chamber Hunternet
13.	Encouraging new business growth	Investigate using vacant floorspace in the commercial centres, particularly Beresfield, for small start up businesses or those migrating from a home office.	Administrative, mentoring and training support could be provided to build an emerging small business "hub".	Growing 2322 Local business peak groups Councils Department of Industry and Investment Hunter Business Enterprise Centre Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Business Chamber
14.	All commercial/town centres except Thornton have a stable or declining population base	Examine the potential for medium density aged housing, particularly near the Beresfield town centre.  Examine the potential for more seniors housing and adaptable housing.	This will allow older people to have a housing alternative in the local area and free up existing detached houses for younger families.	Councils Development Industry Property Council Master Builders Association

No.	Issue	Response	Comment	Key stakeholders
15.	Medical facilities	Encourage more comprehensive medical facilities in the town centres to meet the needs of industry (WorkCover, rehabilitation, pre employment checks) as well as general community needs.	This is a high need identified in the survey. The town centres are close to the industrial areas and offer easy parking.  Comprehensive medical facilities offering a diversity of services oriented to aged people may have potential.	Growing 2322 Interagency Local business peak bodies Industry peak bodies, e.g. AIG Councils Department of Industry and Investment Hunter Division of General Practice University of Newcastle
16.	An ageing population	Encourage the development of services and retail targeted to older people in the Beresfield town centre.	This will meet a growing local need and provide additional economic stimulus.	Interagency Local business peak bodies Councils Department of Industry and Investment
17.	Area improvements are required	Undertake area improvements including landscaping to major entry roads, particularly of the existing suburbs.  Ensure town centres are linked to the surrounding suburb by accessible pathways, and that the town centres are “aged” and “young child” friendly (ramps, wide doorways, accessible toilets etc.).	This will improve the attractiveness of the areas and increase the market base.  A Main street Program would be valuable for Beresfield.	Councils Service Clubs Department of Industry and Investment
18.	Appearance of Woodberry shops	All Woodberry shops should face the same street if possible, preferably Lawson Avenue.	Partially because shops face two different streets, the shopping centre looks half occupied and untidy.	Maitland Council Local Businesses Department of Industry and Investment
19.	Public transport and other support transport links	Improve public transport (bus) from the industrial areas to railway stations, particularly Beresfield railway station, but also Thornton. Note: the industrial areas are generally not adjacent to the	This was identified as a needed improvement to the area. If public transport (and cycleway) access to Beresfield railway station was improved, it would help support the town centre.	Transport NSW Councils Local business peak bodies Interagency

No.	Issue	Response	Comment	Key stakeholders
		<p>railway stations and need a bus/cycle links to access them, as well as bicycle facilities</p> <p>Improved and more comprehensive footpaths/cycleways to key destinations are important across the area</p>		
20.	Public transport	Improve public transport from the industrial areas to the residential areas of Beresfield Thornton and Woodberry, as well as to TAFE Metford.	This would improve the ability of the local community to access employment in the light industrial areas. It could take the form of an extension of a service to the railway stations.	Transport NSW Councils Local business peak bodies Interagency
21.	Champions	Identify champions to demonstrate and encourage others to participate in initiatives to meet needs identified in the survey.	Businesses respond well to practical examples and leadership from within their own groups.	Growing 2322 Local business peak bodies Hunter Valley Youth Express Australian Industry Group (AIG)
22.	Residents' skills	Identify ways to build the skills of residents from a local training base, such as in schools or vacant shops. This could include surveying or hold focus groups of residents, such as home based parents, to ascertain their skill and learning needs to break the cycle of low income/educational outcomes.	This will build local skills and income. It will also help meet local employee supply skills gaps.	Growing 2322 Councils Interagency TAFE DET/Schools Hunter Valley Youth Express Department of Housing

## Purpose

The aim of the “Growing 2322” Business Retention and Expansion Survey (BRES) is to obtain an accurate audit of the local businesses within the target areas, including their perceptions of the local business climate and expectations.

The aim of the survey is to build an accurate information base about the businesses in the study area, and to identify issues and opportunities that are either nominated by the respondents or which arise from an analysis of the survey results. This information base could be used to identify opportunities for the local area arising from the operation of the surveyed businesses, as well as matters which impede business and related social growth. There is a lack of knowledge about the existing businesses, and that as a result the survey aims provide a very important source of information for the steering committee, the Councils and other stakeholders.

The longer term objectives of the “Growing 2322” project are to:

- Improve and develop knowledge and access to meaningful local employment pathways for local youth
- Increase knowledge and access to employment and business enterprise opportunities for the local community
- Potentially identify what social infrastructure is required to support large scale employment land development
- Increase the socio-economic standing of the communities.

## Background

The Beresfield, Hexham, Tarro, Thornton and Woodberry residential and commercial areas are adjacent to growing industrial estates (Beresfield and Thornton) and an established industrial area (Hexham).

There is currently a limited understanding of what industries and businesses are in these employment areas and how they, as a local economy, could link into the local community, or how these links could be strengthened more broadly.

A BRES has never previously been undertaken in these areas and there is no pre-existing business directory or local business organisation (i.e. local Chamber of Commerce, etc.) The local commercial areas of Beresfield, Tarro, Thornton and Woodberry have been significantly impacted by the growth of the Greenhill Shopping Centre approximately 8 kms west on the New England Highway and the loss of the branches of financial institutions in these centres.

A large development proposal known as Black Hill Employment Lands has been submitted (concept plan stage) to the NSW Department of Planning. This proposal is immediately adjacent (west) of the Beresfield Industrial estate and the Director-Generals requirements (DGRs) noted the need for social

infrastructure to support these employment lands. There is very little research or data available to support the required social infrastructure needs of these types of employment lands.

Furthermore, the Hunter Region Regional Business Growth Plan (DSRD, (now Industry and Investment) 2008) has identified the Freight Hub Employment Lands (intermodal freight hub & associated employment lands) at Beresfield and that the Hunter still has skill and labour shortages for a majority of industries.

The draft Maitland Centres Strategy also notes the potential industrial growth along the New England Highway within the Maitland LGA.

The target areas for the BRES are all located within the 2322 postcode area and include: Local commercial centres (Beresfield, Tarro, Thornton and Woodberry) and the industrial estates of Beresfield, Thornton and Hexham. The Hexham Industrial Estate was identified by the project steering group as an area that came to Beresfield to get local service needs met .

“Growing 2322” is a local community economic development project with key partners including the Hunter Valley Youth Express Partnership Broker Program, the Australian Industry Group (AIG), the local high school (Francis Greenway HS), members of the local business community, and Newcastle and Maitland Councils.

## **Methodology**

The survey was undertaken using a modified form of the NSW Department of Industry and Investment BRES survey questionnaire used across NSW. The survey form was designed to identify business characteristics and needs as well as explore business views about local social infrastructure and the potential for greater business-community links.

Strategy Hunter consultants was engaged to undertake the survey by the Growing 2322 committee.

The survey was administered by visiting each business premise within the study area and requesting that a senior administrative or managerial staff member complete the survey form. A return visit was made some 10-14 days later to collect the completed survey form. When survey forms had not been completed, the business was requested to mail or email the completed form to the consultants. Where a survey form had not been completed because it had been misplaced, a new questionnaire was issued, together with a request that the completed questionnaire be sent to the consultants.

The survey was undertaken in November and December 2010, and completed forms were received by mail until late January 2011.

It was decided not to mail or email the survey form to businesses for a number of reasons including:

- The absence of a database of all businesses in the area
- The difficulty of communicating with many businesses to build awareness of the survey, due to their diverse nature and interests
- A more personal approach had the potential to increase the response rate, particularly the personal collection of completed forms.

For the same reasons an online survey was not used. Even though this would have been considerably more efficient, it would have been far less effective due to the strong likelihood of a poor response rate.

On reflection, it is believed that the door to door approach considerably increased the response rate. Furthermore, it enabled the consultants to gain a detailed understanding of businesses in the area, which greatly assisted in the interpretation of the survey results. It also enabled a number of existing or potential business networks to be identified, which the Growing 2322 Committee could use in further pursuing their work.

The survey analysis was undertaken by manually entering the responses into Survey Monkey. While Survey Monkey could have been used to administer the questionnaire online directly from businesses, this was not used for the reasons outlined above.

The consultants coded any open ended survey responses into their major groupings for analysis. The Survey Monkey outputs were downloaded and further analysed using Excel.

There were 100 responses out of a total of 450 questionnaires distributed, leading to a response rate of 22%. It should be noted that the response rate varied by question because some forms were not fully or correctly completed.

## Locality description

A socio demographic locality description has been included in this report because one of the aims of the study is to identify existing and potential links between the employment areas of 2322 and the resident population. It is difficult to do this without understanding the socio demographic characteristics of the residential areas. Census figures for employment and economic activity have not been included because the employment areas within the suburbs have undergone considerable change and expansion since the 2006 census.

The SEIFA score for each suburb has been shown. SEIFA scores indicate the collective socio-economic status of an area's residents. The socio-economic conditions of individual residents in any one area will vary. SEIFA should not be used to indicate the socio-economic status of individuals or households and provides a relative measure of the socio economic status of areas.

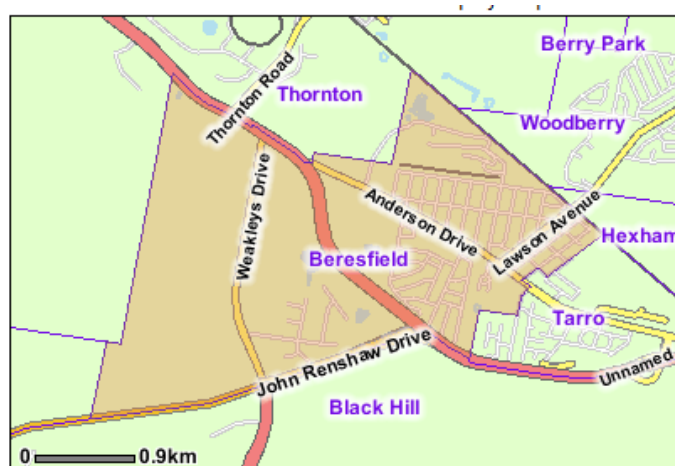
### 2322

The postcode area of 2322 is comprised of a number of suburbs. Like many postcodes it is not a precise fit to accepted suburb boundaries. For the purposes of this study the collective term “2322” has been confined to those areas within the suburbs of Beresfield, Hexham, Tarro, Thornton and Woodberry. A snapshot of the characteristics of each suburb can be found below.

### Beresfield

Beresfield is located 17 km west of the Newcastle City Centre. It has a railway station with regular passenger services. It contains a small “main street” commercial centre with a range of shops and services to meet weekly needs. A number of shops and services are also located along Anderson Drive, the arterial road which runs through the suburb. It also has a Council run swimming pool and library. It has a number of child care centres and a Government primary school.

Figure 1: Beresfield map



Map courtesy of ABS.

Two light industrial areas are located in the south of Beresfield. They are separated from the balance of the suburb by the New England Highway, which presents a major physical and psychological barrier between the residential and industrial areas. The two industrial areas are located on either

side of Weakley's Drive, and are known as the Holmwood and Freeway industrial estates. Both industrial areas have developed since the late 1990's. While the existing developed light industrial areas have limited vacant land there is potential for the areas to expand on currently zoned light industrial land which is undeveloped. This means that employment and economic activity will continue to increase.

Beresfield also has a major industrial operation located adjacent to residential area; Baidia chickens processes chickens for human and stock consumption. It is a large employer.

With the exception of Tarro, Beresfield is spatially separated from other Newcastle LGA suburbs, although it is adjacent to Woodberry in the north and Thornton in the west, which are both in Maitland LGA.

In 2006 there were 3118 people living in Beresfield. Beresfield has a more aged population than the Lower Hunter (Newcastle Statistical Subdivision), with 20.6% of its population aged over 65 years, compared with 15.6% for the Lower Hunter.

Beresfield is likely to have declined in population since 2006, as a result of the ageing of the population and due to the absence of land for residential expansion, although urban consolidation will reduce this trend.. There is unlikely to be an increase in population for the foreseeable future.

Of those in the labour force, a slightly higher percentage of Beresfield residents worked full time and a slightly lower percentage worked part time than the Lower Hunter. Around the same percentage of the labour force was unemployed in both areas. Beresfield residents tend to be employed in less skilled lower paid jobs than the Lower Hunter; Beresfield has a lower proportion of managers, professionals and tradespersons, and a higher proportion of labourers.

The aged population profile and jobs held by Beresfield residents is reflected in its income structure- with much lower individual, family and household incomes than the Lower Hunter.

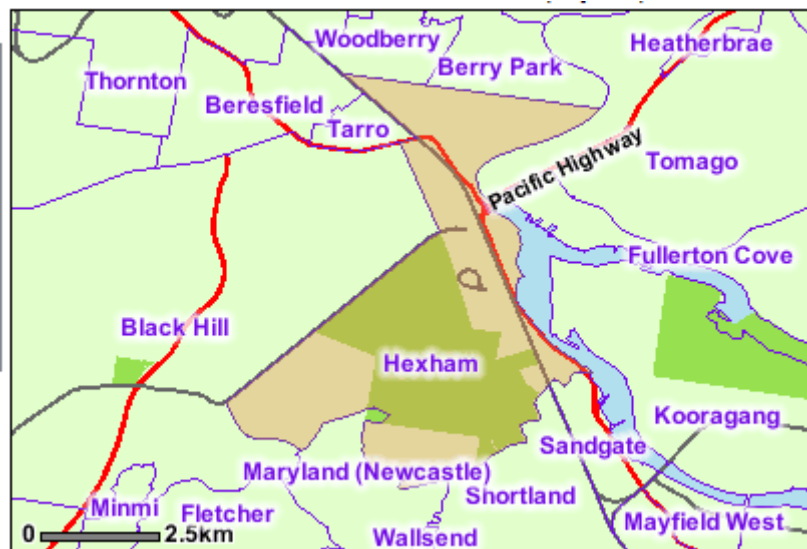
Beresfield has a higher proportion of owner occupied housing, and a lower proportion of rented housing than the Lower Hunter. This is a typical of an older suburb dominated by detached housing.

Beresfield has a SEIFA score of 894. This places it within the lowest 20% of scores in Australia.

## ***Hexham***

Hexham is located 12 km to the west of the Newcastle City Centre. It is a long thin urban area with the New England Highway running along its long axis. It has a railway station with regular passenger services, although this is relatively distant and isolated from residences and many employers. It does not contain a commercial centre, or school. Residents must travel from the suburb to obtain day to day goods and services, other than those available from a licensed club and a number of fast food establishments on the New England Highway.

Figure 2: Hexham map



Map courtesy of ABS

Hexham is largely industrial, with a small residential area. It is spatially separated from the other suburbs of Newcastle, with the only access being via the New England and Pacific Highways. Urban growth (residential and industrial) of Hexham is constrained by the Hexham wetlands to the south and the Hunter River to the north. Much of the land is flood prone. Nonetheless, its location on the highway system provides Hexham with a highly accessible and high profile location for industrial uses. Hexham has a long industrial heritage, being the previous location of the shipping wharves and rail facilities for the J&A Brown coal empire.

In 2006 152 people lived in Hexham. The population of Hexham has declined for a number of decades as industrial premises have gradually occupied land that was formerly housing, and the difficulty of expanding the residential area due to flood prone land. The local school closed in the 1970's as a result.

Hexham is likely to have declined in population since 2006, as a result of the ageing of the population, due to the absence of land for residential expansion, and the ongoing replacement of residences by industrial premises in much of the suburb. There is unlikely to be an increase in population for the foreseeable future.

Compared with the Lower Hunter, Hexham has a lower proportion of young children, and of youth and young adults; it has a higher proportion of the 25-54 year old group.

It has a higher proportion of males than females compared with the Lower Hunter, and a higher proportion of those "never married".

Of those in the labour force, a lower percentage of Hexham residents worked full time and a lower percentage part time than the Lower Hunter. Double the percentage of the labour force was unemployed in Hexham (15.4%) than the Lower Hunter (7.1%). Hexham residents tend to be employed in less skilled lower paid jobs than the Lower Hunter; Beresfield has a lower proportion of

managers, professional and tradespersons, and a higher proportion of labourers, sales workers, community and personal services workers and machinery operators and drivers.

The occupations and high unemployment rate of Hexham residents is reflected in its income structure- with much lower individual, family and household incomes than the Lower Hunter.

Hexham has a lower proportion of owner occupied housing, and around the same proportion of rented housing as the Lower Hunter (Hexham has a larger proportion of “not stated”). Hexham has a high proportion of lone person households.

Hexham has a SEIFA score of 849. This places it within the lowest 10% of scores in Australia.

### **Tarro**

Tarro is located 16 km west of the Newcastle City Centre. It is adjacent to Beresfield (to the west), with which forms part of a continuous urban area. It has a railway station with regular passenger services. A limited range of shops located along Anderson Drive meet some daily needs. It has a Catholic primary school and a Government primary school.

**Figure 3: Tarro map**



Map courtesy of ABS.

With the exception of Beresfield, Tarro is spatially separated from other Newcastle LGA suburbs.

In 2006 there were 1,558 people living in Tarro. Tarro has a slightly more aged population than the Lower Hunter (Newcastle Statistical Subdivision).

Tarro is likely to have declined in population since 2006, as a result of the ageing of the population and due to the absence of land for residential expansion. There is unlikely to be an increase in population for the foreseeable future.

Of those in the labour force, a slightly higher percentage of Tarro residents worked full time and a slightly lower worked part time than the Lower Hunter. Around the same percentage of the labour force was unemployed in both areas. Tarro residents tend to be employed in less skilled lower paid

jobs than compared with the Lower Hunter; Tarro has a lower proportion of managers and professionals, and a higher proportion of labourers and machinery operators and drivers.

The occupations of Tarro residents are reflected in its income structure- with lower individual, family and household incomes than the Lower Hunter (although higher than neighbouring Beresfield).

Tarro has a higher proportion of owner occupied housing, and a lower proportion of rented housing than the Lower Hunter.

Tarro has a SEIFA score of 908. This places it within the lowest 20% of scores in Australia.

## **Thornton**

Thornton is located 21 km west of the Newcastle City Centre and 10 km east of the Maitland City Centre. It is located to the west of Beresfield. It has a railway station with regular passenger services. It contains a small enclosed commercial centre with a range of shops and services to meet weekly needs. A number of shops and services are also located along Thornton Road, the arterial road which provides access to the suburb from the New England Highway. It has a library, a number of child care centres and a Government primary school.

Thornton is targeted for significant residential growth. The 2006 Lower Hunter Regional Strategy identified Thornton North as having the potential for 7000 additional dwellings. It is likely this area will have an additional shopping centre to cater for convenience needs.

**Figure 4: Thornton map**



Map courtesy of ABS.

Two light industrial areas are located in the south of the residential area and north of the New England Highway. They are separated from the balance of the suburb by the railway line, which presents a physical and psychological barrier between the residential and industrial areas. The two industrial areas are located on either side of Thornton Road. Anderson Drive provides a direct connection of Thornton with Beresfield. Both industrial areas have developed since the late 1990's, are close to full development, and there is only limited opportunity for further expansion.

Thornton is spatially separated from other Maitland LGA suburbs.

In 2006 there were 8,388 people living in Thornton. Thornton has a more youthful population than the Lower Hunter (Newcastle Statistical Subdivision), with 26.9% of its population aged less than 14 years and only 5.4% of its population aged over 65 years, compared with 19.6% and 15.6% respectively for the Lower Hunter.

Of those in the labour force, a higher percentage of Thornton residents worked full time and a slightly lower worked part time than the Lower Hunter. A lower proportion of the labour force was unemployed in Thornton. Thornton residents are more likely to be employed as technicians and trades workers, clerical and administrative workers and less likely as professional compared with the Lower Hunter.

The more youthful population profile and labour force characteristics of Thornton residents is reflected in its income structure- with higher individual, family and household incomes than the Lower Hunter.

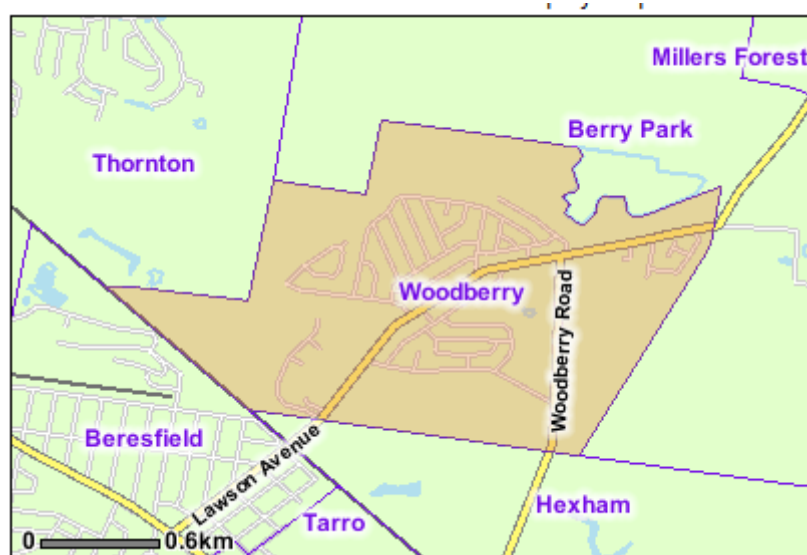
Thornton has a higher proportion of owner occupied housing (including a much higher proportion of dwellings being purchased by their occupiers), and a lower proportion of rented housing than the Lower Hunter. This is a typical of growing suburb dominated by detached housing.

Thornton has a SEIFA score of 1018. This places it in the highest 30% of scores in Australia.

## **Woodberry**

Woodberry is located 18.5 km west of the Newcastle City Centre and 15 km east of Maitland City Centre. It is separated from Beresfield to the south, by the railway line. It contains a small commercial centre with a small number shops and services to meet day to day needs. It has a child care centre, a Government primary school, and a Government high school that serves the surrounding suburbs.

**Figure 5: Woodberry map**



Map courtesy of ABS.

Woodberry is spatially separated from other Maitland LGA suburbs, although it is adjacent to Beresfield in the south, which is in Newcastle LGA.

In 2006 there were 3,255 people living in Woodberry. Woodberry has a more youthful population than the Lower Hunter, with a greater proportion of Woodberry's population aged less than 25 years than the Lower Hunter.

Woodberry is likely to have declined in population since 2006, as a result of the ageing of the population and the absence of opportunities for residential expansion, although this is likely to have been offset to some extent by a turnover in tenancies providing an inflow of younger residents. There is unlikely to be an increase in population for the foreseeable future.

Of those in the labour force, a slightly lower percentage of Woodberry residents worked full time and part time than the Lower Hunter. A higher proportion of the labour force was unemployed in Woodberry. Woodberry residents tend to be employed in less skilled lower paid jobs compared with the Lower Hunter; Woodberry has a lower proportion of managers, and professionals, and a higher proportion of labourers, technicians and trades persons and machinery operators and drivers.

The youthful population profile and jobs held by Woodberry residents is reflected in its income structure- with lower individual, family and household incomes similar to Beresfield, and less than the Lower Hunter.

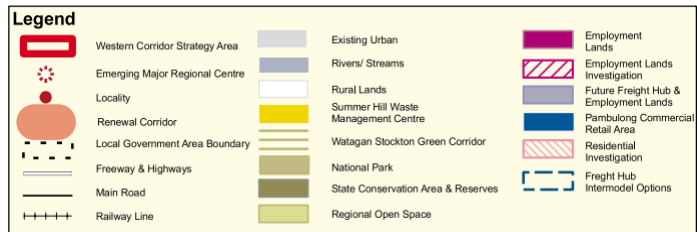
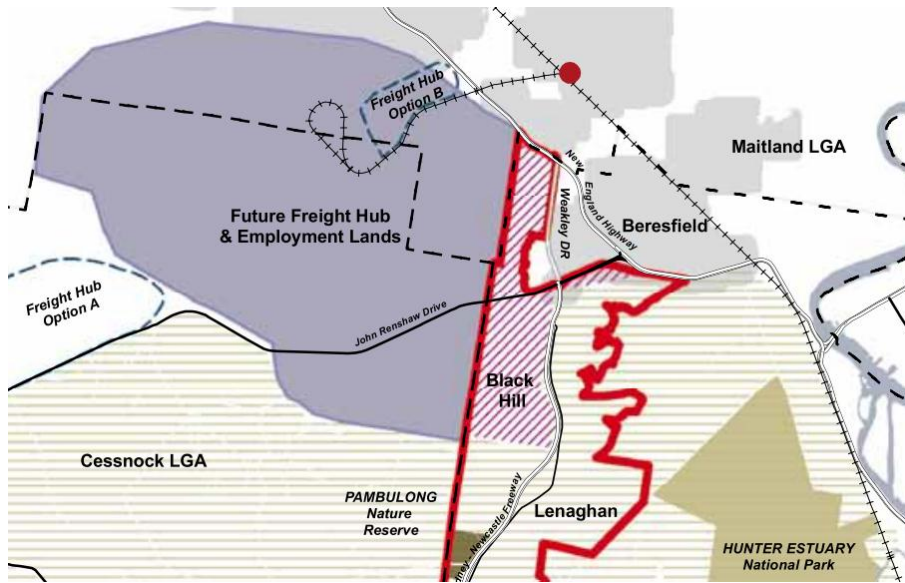
Woodberry has much higher proportion of rented housing than the Lower Hunter, and over half of the rental housing is owned by the Department of Housing.

Woodberry has a SEIFA score of 854. This score places it within the lowest 10% of SEIFA score in Australia.

### ***Other land***

The 2010 Newcastle Lake Macquarie Western Corridor Planning Strategy (NSW Department of Planning) includes land to the south of the New England Highway in its study area, as shown in Figure 6. It shows a very large area of potential employment land to the southwest of Beresfield, including a freight hub. It should be noted that this Strategy is relatively general in its content and detailed study is required to confirm the likelihood of the potential new development. Much of the land is significantly affected by open cut and underground coal mining.

Figure 6: Excerpt map from the Newcastle Lake Macquarie Western Corridor Planning Strategy



## Survey Results

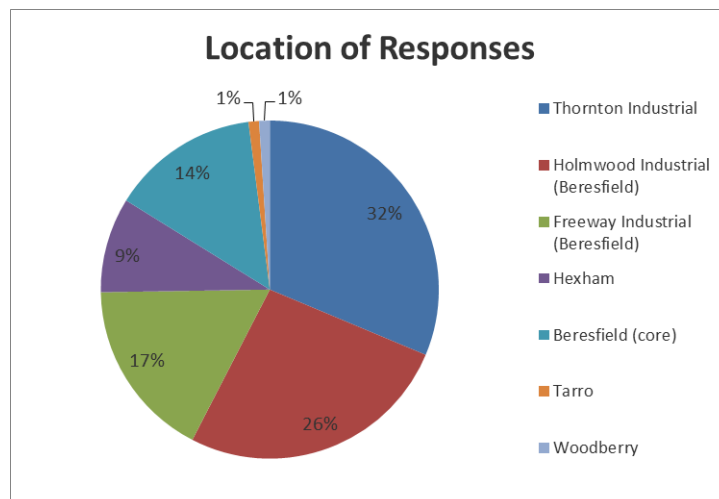
### Location of respondents

The figure below shows the location of the 100 respondents. The respondents appear to be well distributed across the study area (see Figure 7), meaning that results are unlikely to have been skewed by an overrepresentation of a specific locality.

It should be noted that this breakdown subdivides the suburb of Beresfield into the Holmwood Industrial Area (i.e. east of Weakley's Drive and south of the New England Highway), the Freeway Industrial Area (i.e. west of Weakley's Drive and north of the New England Highway), and Beresfield (core) (i.e. north of the New England Highway).

The relatively small number of respondents from each locality means that there is little value in analysing results on a smaller than area wide ("2322") basis because results would not be statistically valid.

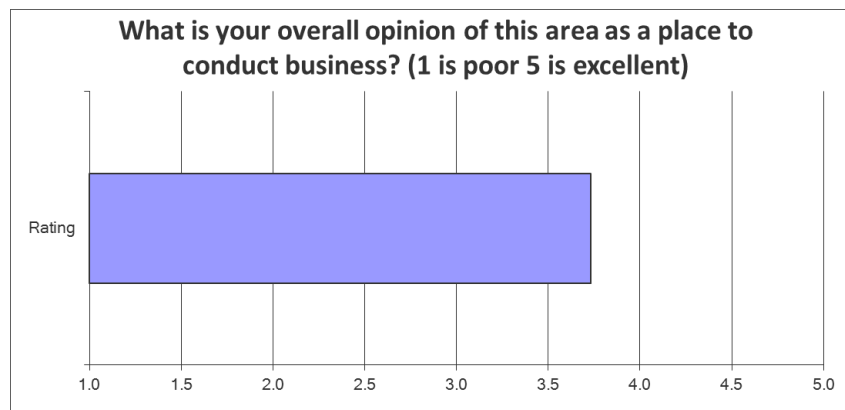
Figure 7:



### Q1: Opinion of the area as a place to conduct business

Respondents regarded 2322 has a very good place to conduct business (see Figure 8). The area received an average score of 3.73 out of 5, on a 5 point scale of 1=poor to 5=excellent

Figure 8:



## Q2: What do you see as some of the main assets of the community as a place to live and own a business?

This was an open ended question (multiple responses were permitted – see Table 1) and the five most nominated assets of the area were access to the main road system, being close to schools, the location in general, sporting facilities, and access to facilities in general.

**Table 1: Main assets of the area**

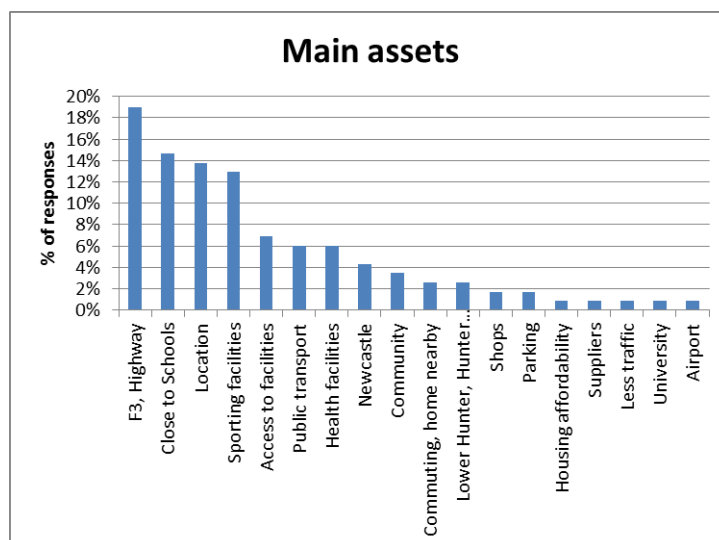
Asset	% responses
Access to the F3 and highway	19.0%
Close to schools	14.7%
Location	13.8%
Sporting facilities	15.0%
Access to facilities in general	6.9%

Analysis of all responses indicates that the location of the area was regarded as its greatest asset. As well as being specifically nominated, location is an underlying theme in a number of nominated assets. Location is related to ease of access to the main road system, which in turn provides access to a wide range of facilities, some of which are not necessarily in the 2322 area.

Given the “business” nature of the survey it is surprising that “close to schools” received the second highest response rate. This may be due to the perceived quality of schools in the 2322 area as well as the proximity of Hunter Valley Grammar School (given that most respondents were managers/owners of businesses).

Figure 9 shows the distribution of all responses.

**Figure 9:**



### Q3: What can be done to make the local economy stronger and to create more jobs?

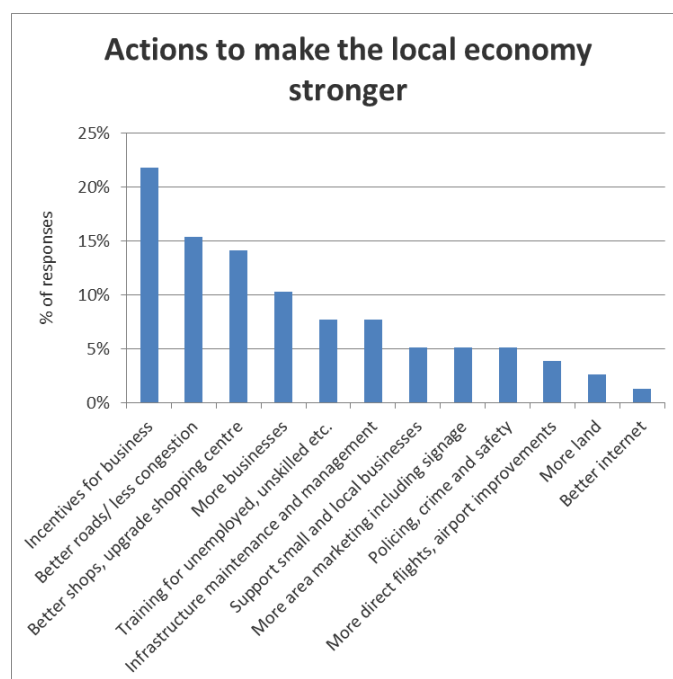
This was an open ended question (multiple responses were permitted – see Table 2) and the four most nominated actions to make the local economy stronger were incentives for business, better roads and less congestion, better shops including upgrading the shopping centre(s), and more businesses. Training for the unemployed and unskilled, and better infrastructure maintenance and management tied for fifth place.

**Table 2: Actions to strengthen the local economy**

Action	% responses
Incentives for business	21.8%
Better roads and less congestion	15.4%
Better shops and/or upgrade shopping centre(s)	14.1%
More businesses in the area	10.3%
Training for the unemployed and unskilled	7.7%
Better infrastructure maintenance and management	7.7%

Details of the nominated incentives for business included the provision of grants and lower rates and taxes. Better roads and less congestion often involved a reference to Weakley’s Drive and the F3/John Renshaw Drive roundabout. Little further detail was provided for the other responses. Figure 10 shows the distribution of all responses.

**Figure 10:**



#### **Q4: What main changes would you like to see made to improve this area?**

This was an open ended question (multiple responses were permitted – see Table 3) and by far the most nominated improvement was better roads. The four next most nominated improvements were more shops, services and offices in the town centres, a variety of local area improvements, greater policing, and better infrastructure (other than roads).

**Table 3: Suggested area improvements**

<b>Improvements</b>	<b>% responses</b>
Better roads	46.1%
More shops, services and offices in town centres	9.0%
Local area improvements and management	9.0%
Policing, safety	9.0%
Better infrastructure management (other than roads)	7.9%

An analysis of all responses to this question results in three main areas for improvement:

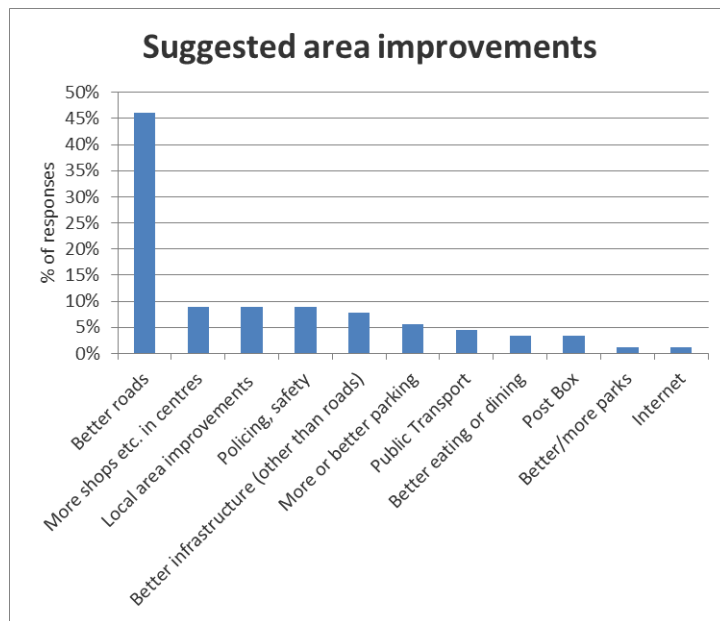
- Improve the roads
- Improve the appearance of the area and other infrastructure
- More activity in the town centres.

All responses are shown in Figure 11.

Further references were made regarding a need to consider:

- Area improvements: refer to the unkempt appearance of some commercial premises and the need to improve the appearance of some localities, sometimes with higher maintenance levels.
- Policing: are generally from respondents in other than industrial areas
- Post boxes: refer to the absence of anywhere to post a letter in the Holmwood or Freeway industrial areas.
- Internet: refer to the inability to access ADSL speed internet within parts of the industrial areas
- Parking: refer to the insufficient worker parking or truck parking in some parts of the industrial area (this appears to relate to the circumstances of specific premises).

Figure 11:



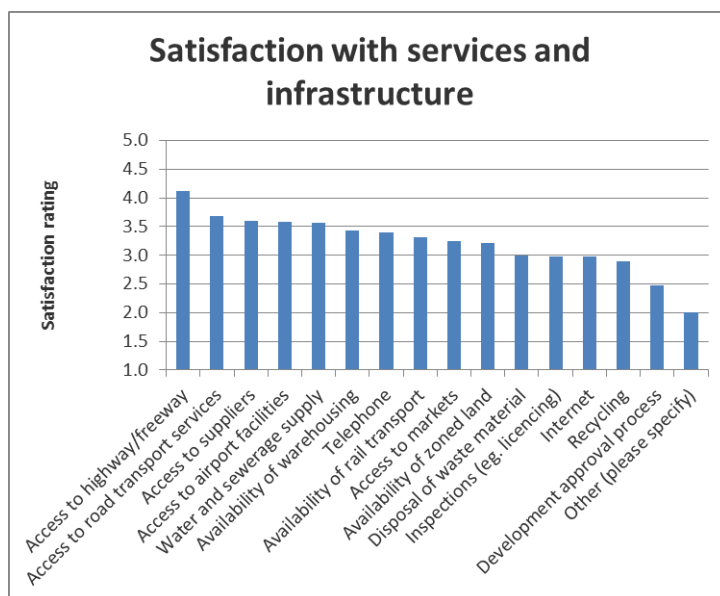
**Q5 a) What is your level of satisfaction with each of the following services and infrastructure?**

Respondents indicated a moderate average level of satisfaction with services and infrastructure- with an average rating of 3.22 across all categories. The highest levels of satisfaction related to the high accessibility of the area to the main road system, transport services, suppliers and the airport, as well as water and sewerage supply.

The categories of lower satisfaction were regulatory matters (development approvals and inspections (e.g. licencing), internet access, and waste management (waste disposal and recycling).

Figure 12 shows satisfaction ratings for all categories tested.

Figure 12:

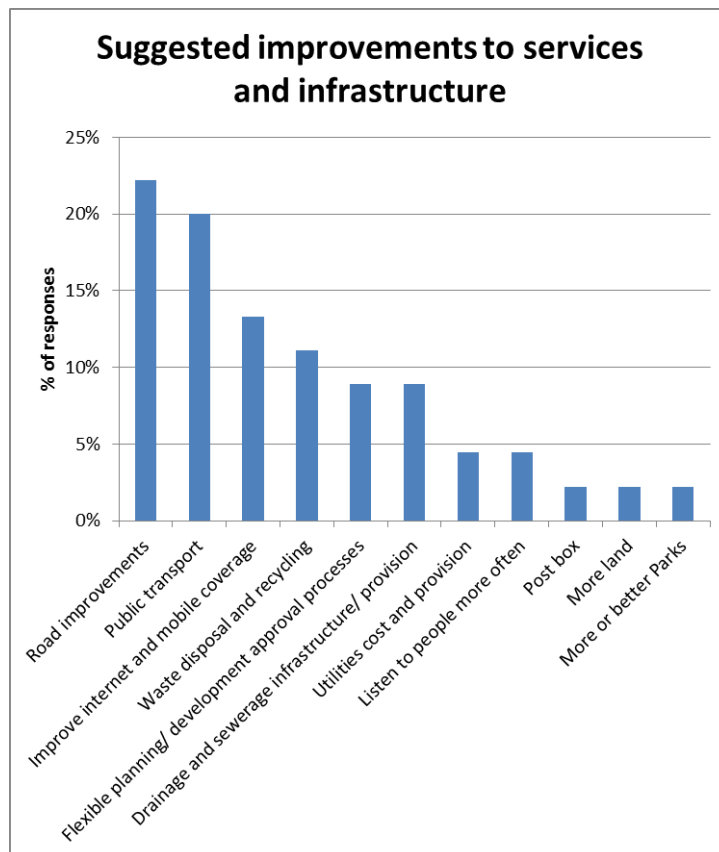


### Q5 b) Do you have any suggestions on how to improve any of the services and infrastructure listed above?

This was an open ended question (multiple responses were permitted) and by far the most frequently nominated improvements were roads and public transport. The next most nominated improvements were internet and mobile coverage, waste disposal and recycling, more flexible planning/improved development approval processes, and drainage and sewer infrastructure provision (mainly Hexham).

The responses are shown in Figure 13.

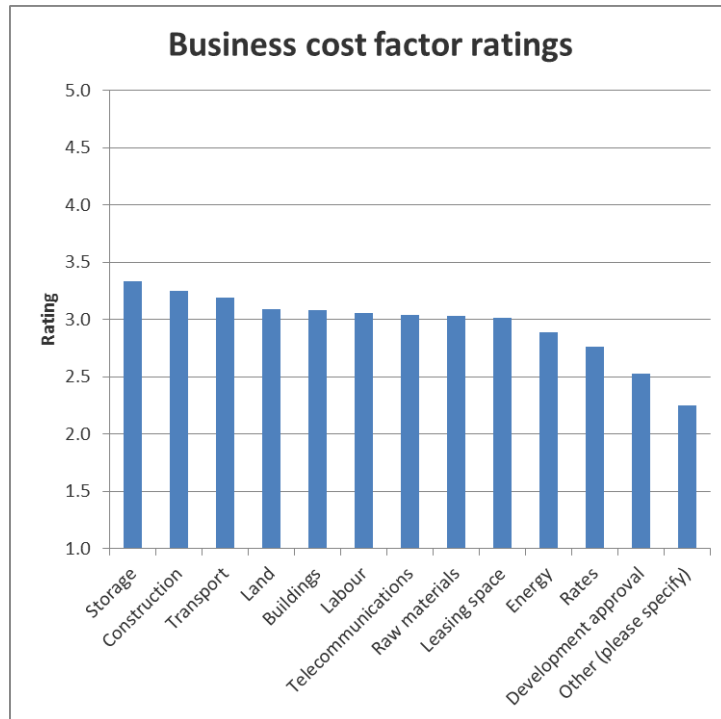
Figure 13:



### Q5 c) In terms of the costs of doing business, how do you rate this community with respect to these factors?

In relation to the costs of doing business, the 2322 area was rated moderately or “reasonable” by respondents. The most favourable cost factors were storage, construction, transport, land, and buildings. The least favourable cost factors were development approvals, rates, energy, leasing space, and raw materials. No cost factor rated below 2, so it could be concluded that no identified cost factor was perceived to be “very excessive” (see Figure 14). On the other hand, the most favourable cost factor rated just over 3, so it could be concluded that that no identified cost factor was perceived to be “very favourable”.

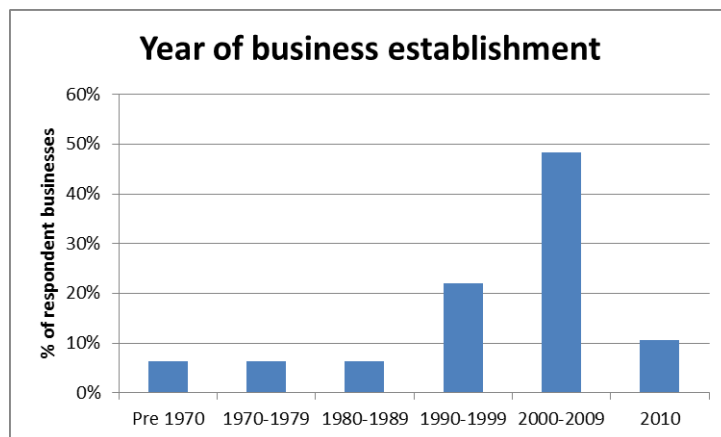
Figure 14:



**Q6 (a): In what year did you commence operating this business?**

Businesses in 2322 are young, as shown in Figure 15. Over half the businesses that responded to the questionnaire were less than 10 years old. Less than one fifth of businesses were more than 20 years old. This means that many of their business practices are contemporary and they have grown in response to recent market demand.

Figure 15:



**Q6 (b): Did you establish this business?**

Around half of the respondents established their business (51.5%). This means that at least half of the businesses that responded to the survey are locally owned and not a “branch office” of a national or international company (unless they have been acquired by another firm and the respondent has remained as manager). It also means that at least half of the respondents have a very close personal interest in the future success of the business.

### Q6 (c): If you relocated this business, please indicate where you have moved from:

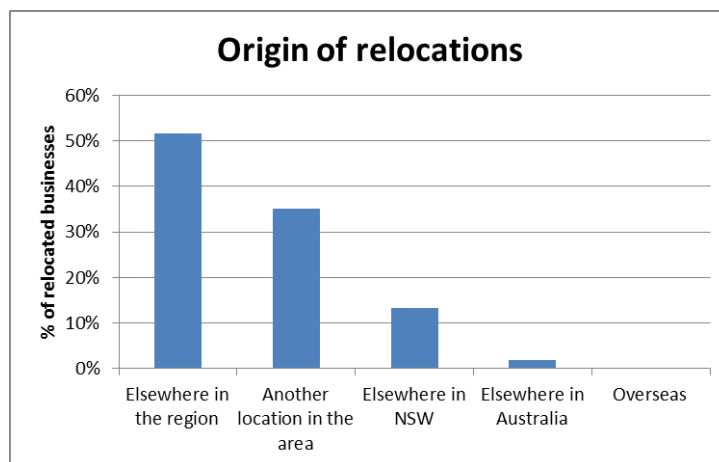
60 of the 100 responding businesses had relocated from another place, as shown in Figure 16. Less than one fifth of the relocations were from outside the Hunter Region. The 2322 area does not appear to be attracting many businesses from elsewhere in Australia or overseas, and appears to be serving the role of an alternative location for businesses already in the Hunter Region and in many cases, the local area.

Amongst the reasons for this could be:

- Local businesses are very competitive, and as a result businesses from elsewhere do not locate here
- 2322 provides a very attractive location for local businesses to establish and/or expand
- It is more attractive for businesses outside the Hunter Region to either establish or expand elsewhere; and its corollary, 2322 is not an attractive location for the relocation of businesses from outside the Hunter Region.
- the Hunter market can be well served from other location, such as Sydney or the Central Coast

Further research required to determine the low rate of relocations from outside the Hunter Region, because this could be impeding the economic growth of the area.

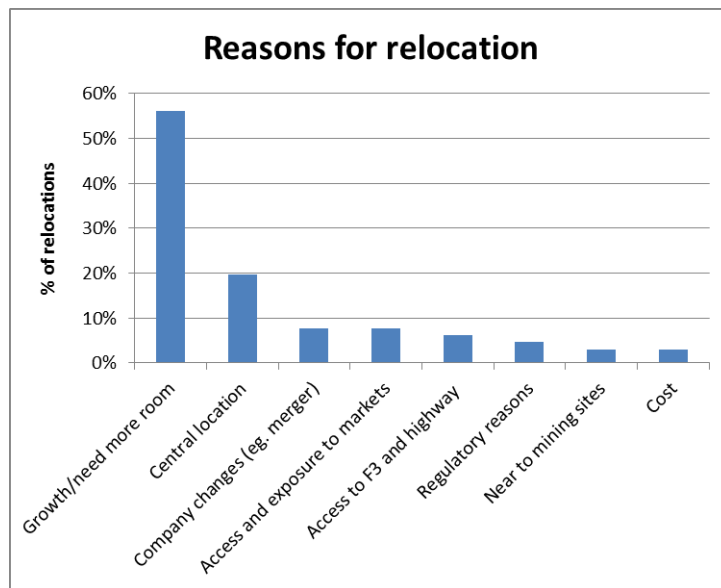
Figure 16:



### Q6 (d): Why did you relocate?

Over half of those who had relocated did so because of business growth often creating a need for more room, as shown in Figure 17. Another one fifth relocated because of the central location of their new site. Access issues which relate to the central location provided by transport infrastructure further increase the importance of the location as a relocating factor.

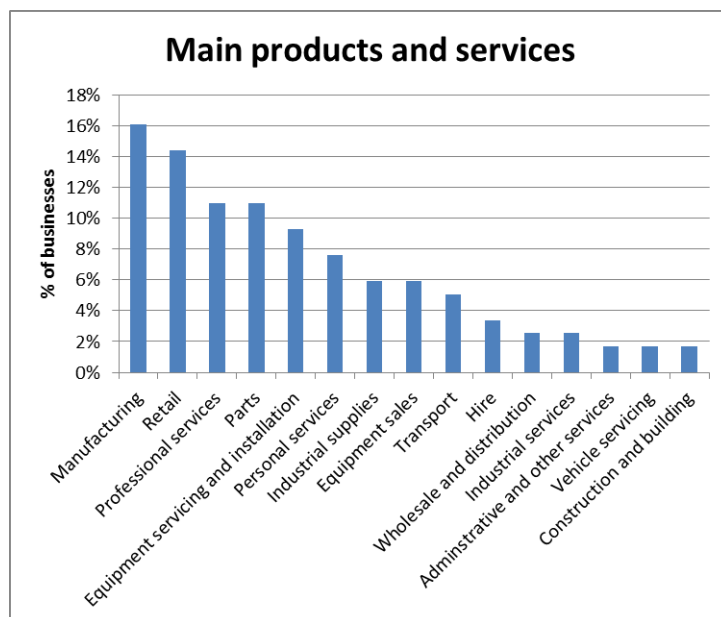
**Figure 17: Reasons for relocation**



**Q7: What are the main products or services you provide?**

This was an open ended question (multiple responses were permitted) and the five main activities undertaken by respondent businesses were manufacturing, retail, professional services, supply of parts, and personal services. Retail and personal services were concentrated in the commercial centres of Thornton and Beresfield, with the other activities more likely to be found in the industrial areas. Professional services were often undertaken in conjunction with another activity, such as engineering design and manufacturing. Figure 18 shows the incidence of various activities.

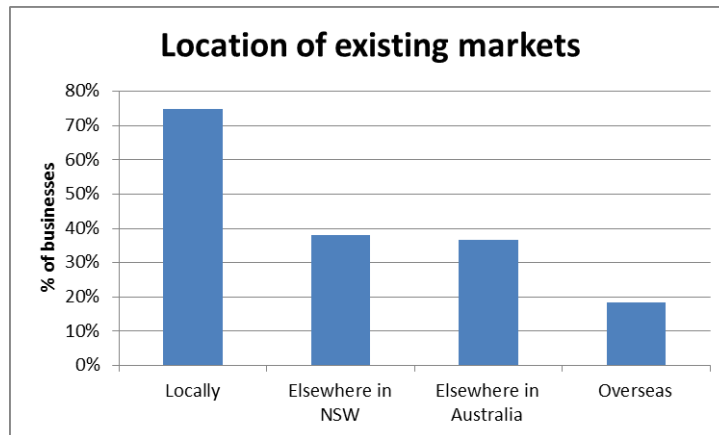
**Figure 18:**



### **Q8: What percentage of your product/services do you sell in various markets?**

As shown in Figure 19, just under 75% of businesses in 2322 sell products or services to local (Hunter Region) customers, with around 38% selling to customers elsewhere in NSW and around 37% to elsewhere in Australia. 18% of businesses export to overseas markets.

Figure 19:



### **Q9 (a): Are you interesting in exporting products or services?**

Just over 21% of businesses that do not currently export goods or services overseas are interested in this market.

### **Q9 (b): Which products or services are you interested in exporting?**

A wide range of products and services were identified for possible export. These include mining equipment, recreation equipment, machinery, engineering services, parts and components, and metal goods.

### **Q10 (a): Which products or services are you selling to overseas markets/customers?**

A wide range of products and services are already exported to overseas customers. These include mining equipment, mining equipment parts, mining related services, recreation equipment, beverages, nappies, parts and components, professional consulting services, holidays (to the inbound tourist market), engine management systems, metal goods and machinery.

### **Q10 (b): Which countries do you export to?**

Most countries receiving exports from 2322 based businesses are in Asia, followed by New Zealand, the USA, and other countries in the Americas. Fiji and South Africa also receive exports from 2322. One business reported that it exports to a wide range of countries.

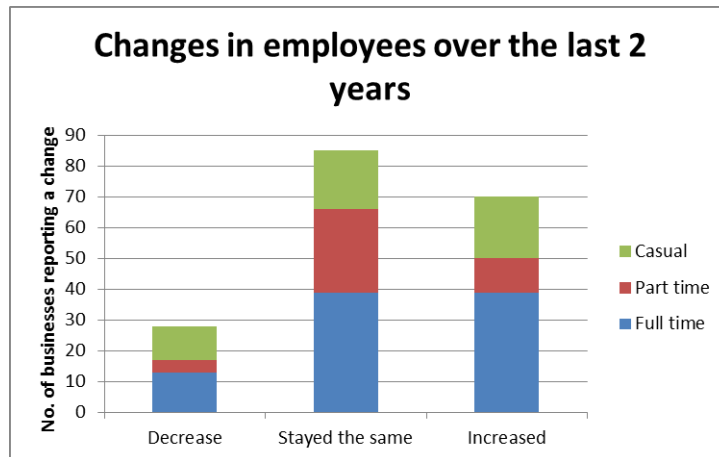
### **Q11: How many people are employed in this business, including owners?**

Most employees were permanent full time (average of 19.8 per business), followed by casual employees (average 6.51 per business), and permanent part time employees (average 2.7 per business). In reality, the number and type of employees varied widely from business to business.

### Q12: How did the number of staff change, if at all, in the last 2 years?

Most businesses either maintained or increased their number of employees over the past 2 years. Full time permanent employees tended to increase to a greater extent than part time or casual employees. This is shown in Figure 20.

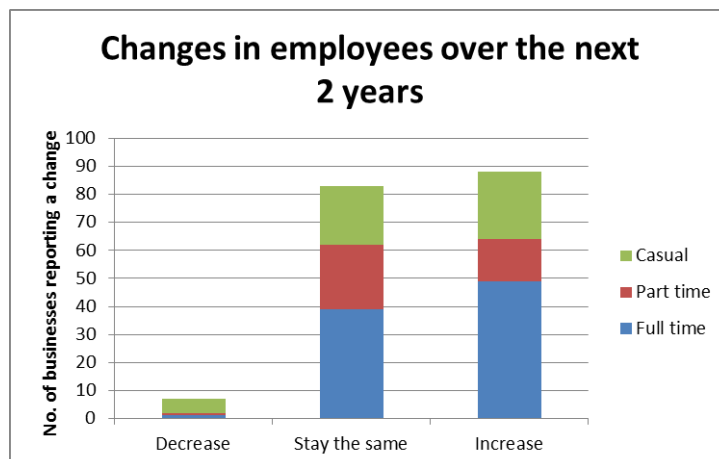
Figure 20:



### Q13: How do you expect the number of staff to change, if at all over the next 2 years?

Most businesses expect their employee numbers to either be maintained or increase over the next two years. Most of the increase is expected to be in permanent full time employees, followed by casual employees. This is shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21:



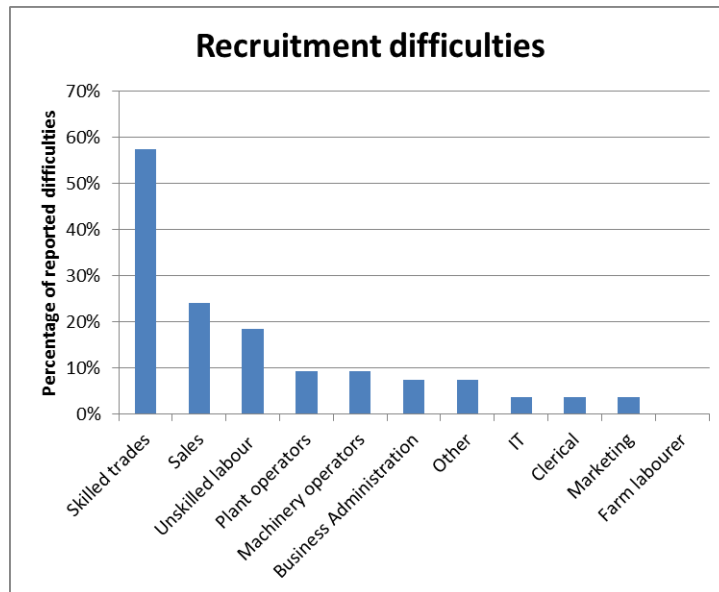
### Q14 (a): Are you experiencing difficulty in finding suitable employees for your business?

Just under half of respondent businesses reporting having difficulty finding suitable employees.

### Q14 (b): Does your company have difficulty recruiting employees in any of the following groups?

By far the most frequent area that businesses reported difficulty in recruiting employees was skilled trades, followed by sales, unskilled labour, plant operators and machinery operators. This is shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Recruitment difficulties



Around 75% of the 31 businesses providing details of their recruitment difficulties had problems recruiting skilled trades, 23% with unskilled workers and 16% “other”.

Skilled trades supply gaps were in a wide range of areas, with no predominant gap areas. Examples of the diversity of supply gaps included metal fabricators, carpet layers, electrical fitters, plant mechanics, diesel mechanics, boilermakers, and cooks. A diversity of gap areas also existed for unskilled jobs.

### Q14(c): Does your business have difficulty retaining employees?

85% of respondent businesses reported no difficulty in retaining their existing employees. 15% reported a difficulty.

### Q14 (d): Do you currently employ trainees and/or apprentices?

Just under 40% (38) of respondent businesses employ trainees or apprentices. The average number of apprentices or trainees per business is 4.26. In reality the number trainees and apprentices varies markedly between businesses.

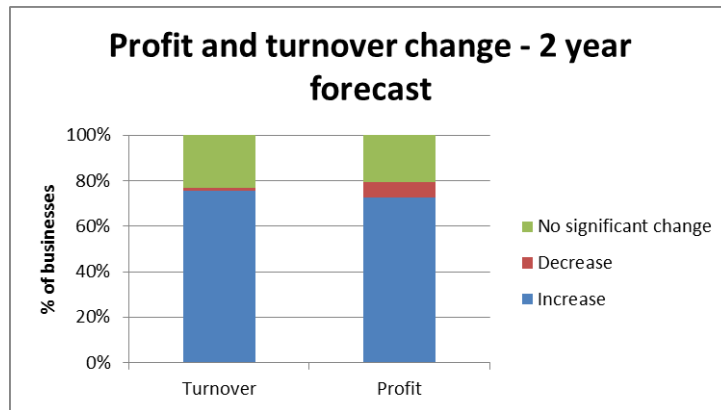
### Q14 (e): Are you interested in employing apprentices or trainees?

Just under 40% (28) of respondent businesses are interested in employing apprentices or trainees. However, this question is ambiguous and the response may include some businesses that already employ them.

**Q15: During the next two years, do you expect your company to increase/decrease/have no significant change in turnover and profit?**

The outlook of respondent businesses is very positive with a large majority of businesses expecting an increase in profits and turnover, as shown in Figure 23. Very few businesses anticipate a decrease in profits or turnover.

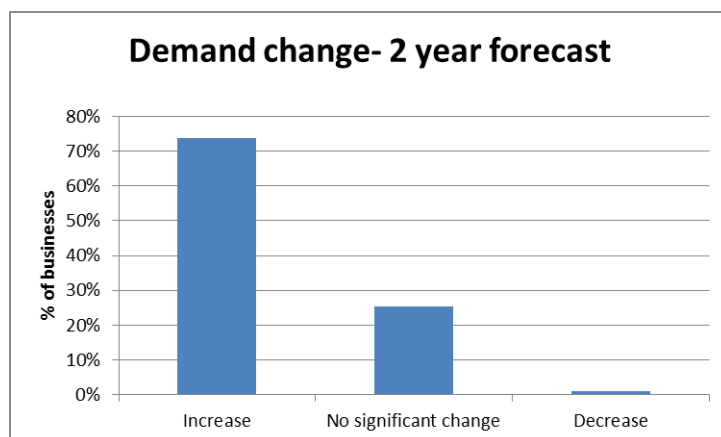
Figure 23:



**Q16: Do you expect the demand for your services/products to change over the next 2 years?**

A large majority of respondent businesses expect the demand for their services and products to increase over the next two years, as shown in Figure 24. Only one respondent anticipated a decrease in demand.

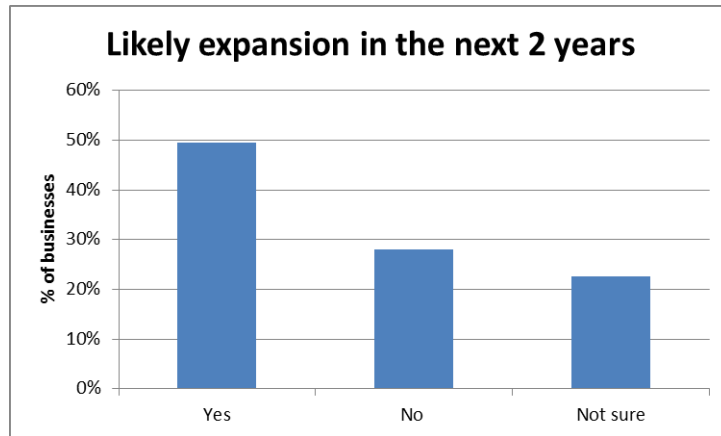
Figure 24:



**Q17 (a): Is your company thinking of expanding within the next 2 years?**

Just under half of the respondent businesses are thinking of expanding on the next 2 years, as shown in Figure 25. Just over one quarter do not anticipate expanding, and just under one quarter are not sure.

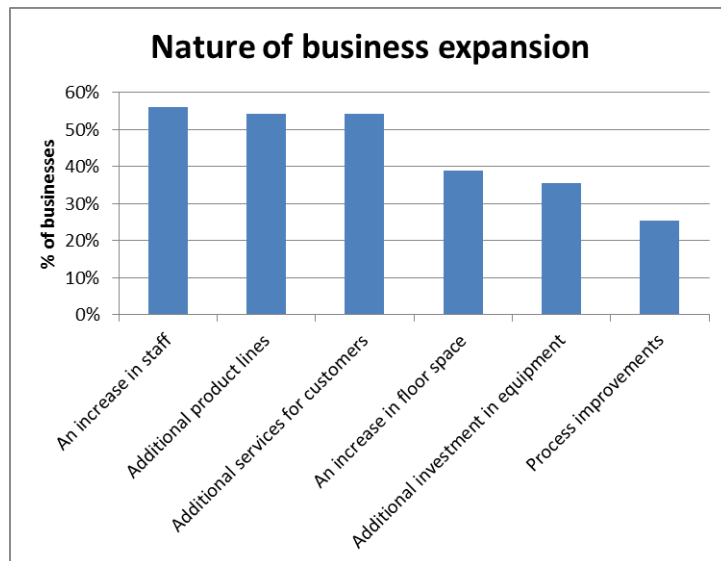
Figure 25:



**Q17 (b): What is the nature of this expansion?**

Respondent businesses anticipated expanding for two main reasons: increasing staff and/or floor space to cater for increased demand in their current offering, or increasing their product line and/or services to broaden their offering to the market. Details of anticipated business expansion are shown in Figure 26.

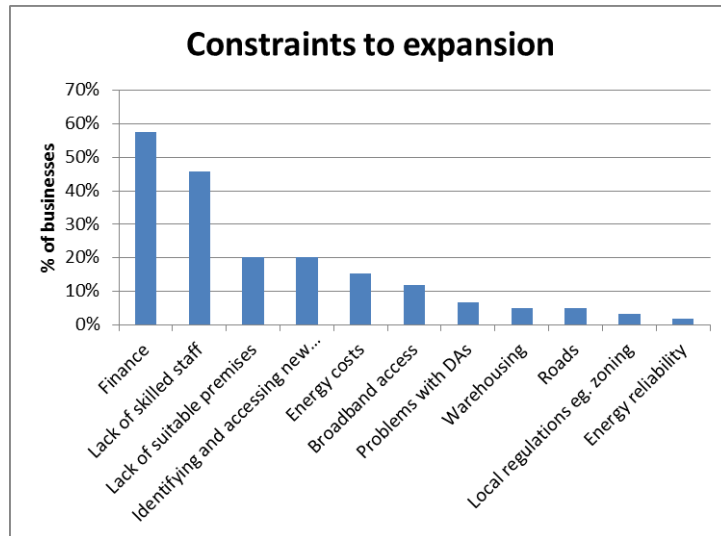
Figure 26:



**Q17(c): What, if any, are the major constraints on your expansion?**

The most frequently mentioned constraints to business expansion were finance and lack of skilled staff. Lack of suitable premises, identifying and access new markets and energy costs were also mentioned as constraints to expansion. Details are shown in Figure 27.

Figure 27:



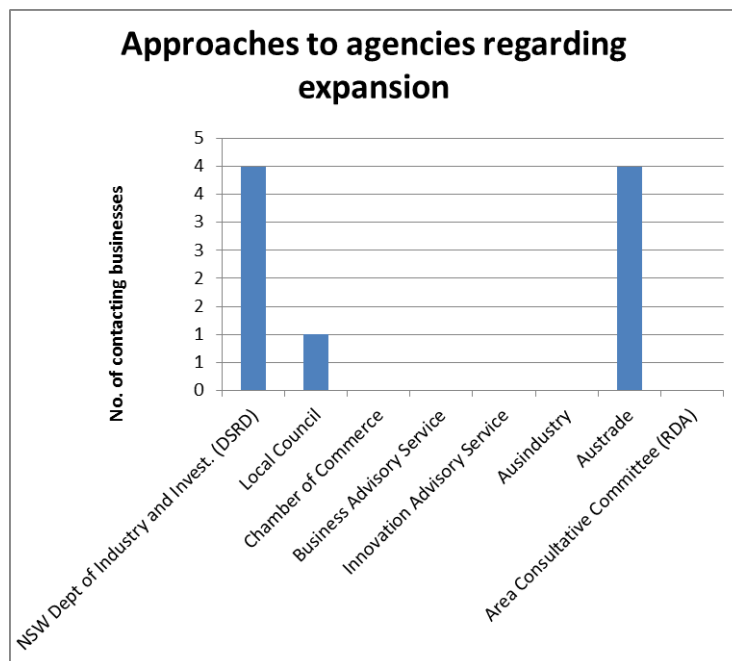
**Q17 (d): Have you approached anybody in local/State/ Commonwealth government or business development organisations to discuss your expansion plans?**

Around 10% of respondent businesses (7) had contacted Government agencies or business development organisations to discuss expansion plans. Unfortunately the questionnaire did not ask why contact had or had not occurred.

**Q17 (e): If yes, which agencies have you approached?**

Over half (4) of the businesses that had contacted agencies in relation to their expansion plans had contacted the NSW Department of Industrial and Investment, additionally over half (4) had contacted Austrade (note: multiple responses permitted – see Figure 28).

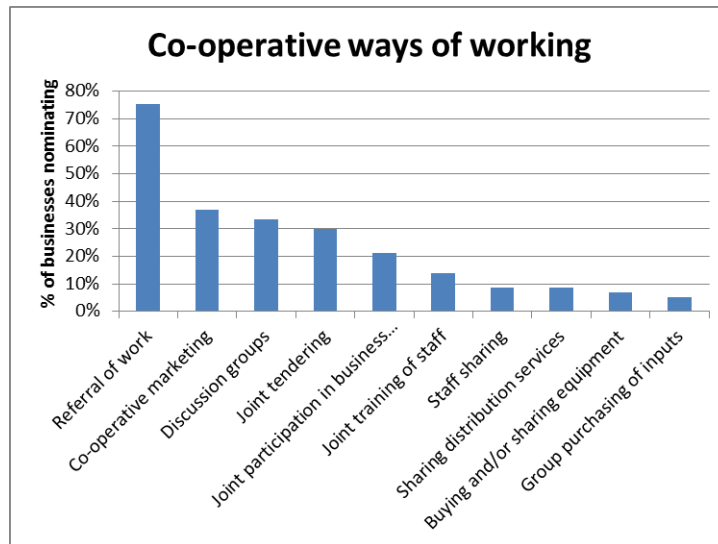
Figure 28:



### Q18 (a): Do you or could you work in a co-operative way with other businesses?

Referral of work was the most frequently nominated way of working (or potentially working) with other businesses, being nominated by 75% of respondent business, as shown in Figure 29. Other frequently nominated ways of working together included co-operative marketing, discussion groups, joint tendering, and joint participation in business management learning.

Figure 29:



### Q18 (b): Do you have any comments or questions on the success or feasibility of these activities?

The comments referred to examples of co-operation such as staff sharing with suppliers, working jointly on jobs with similar businesses, and working with Friendship and View clubs. There were only 8 respondents to this question.

### Q19: What business inputs, including raw materials and services, would you like to purchase locally (within the area or Local Government Area) that you currently purchase from outside the area?

There was no discernable dominant area for increasing business inputs from the local area/ region. Examples provided by the 18 respondents to this question included bearing and seals, steel items (e.g. tube), speciality castings (e.g. aluminium), industrial vacuum loading equipment, food products (e.g. meat), uniforms, PVC, and pest control chemicals.

### Q20 (a): Are you currently considering changing the location of your business?

Only 15% (14) of businesses are considering changing their location. This confirms the high satisfaction level that businesses seem to have with the location and its ability to meet their needs.

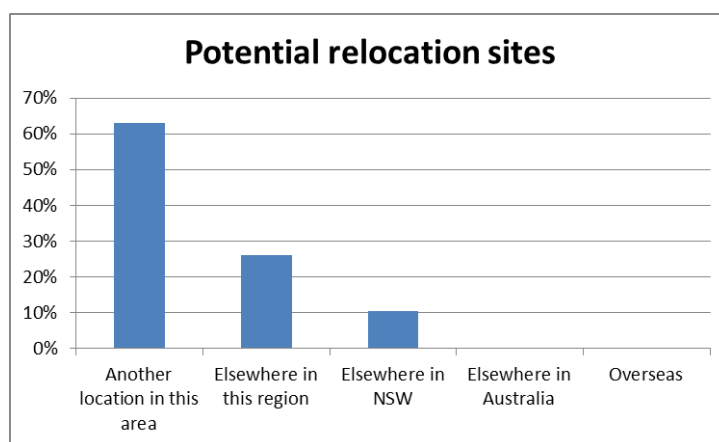
### Q20 (b): If 'yes', please give reasons for considering relocation

Half of those considering relocation are doing so because they need a larger site or building. Other reasons included a perceived oversupply of similar retailers in the area, a need for access to ADSL2 internet, more exposure, better parking, financing, cost, and tenure (wish to own their own building).

### Q20(c): If yes, where are you considering locating to?

Almost 90% of potentially relocating businesses plan to relocate elsewhere in the Hunter Region (including the local area), as shown in figure 30. Over 60% of these would relocate within the local area. It can be concluded that the region suits their business needs well, and provides good access to their markets.

Figure 30:



### Q20 (d): If relocating out of the area/region, what major benefits would the new location offer?

Of the 5 responses to this question, the most frequent mentioned benefits sought through relocation related to customers (greater numbers, closer, new markets). Other responses included a local council that was more flexible with approvals and aesthetic reasons.

### Q20(e): If you haven't yet approached the NSW Department of State and Regional Development, would you be interested in being contacted by them to discuss your expansion and/or relocation plans?

22% (8) of potentially relocating businesses indicated that they would be interested in being contacted by the Department of Industry and Investment regarding their relocation plans.

### Q21: How would you rate your current business management skills, and in 2 years how far would you like to progress those skills in relation to the matters below?

The responses are shown in Table 4 below, and show that responding businesses generally regard themselves as having moderate to very good business management skills. Figure 31, while appearing complex, shows only a small variation in the ratings across the skill areas, other than managing work and life which has a significantly lower rating than other skills areas.

**Table 4: Self rating of current business management skills**

Self rating	1	2	3	4	5
Managing people	0%	4%	42%	<b>44%</b>	10%
Time management	3%	13%	<b>43%</b>	37%	5%
Balancing work and life	13%	26%	<b>40%</b>	13%	9%
Succession planning	13%	16%	<b>34%</b>	32%	4%
Planning and organising work and business systems	0%	14%	<b>43%</b>	35%	8%
Planning and organising production and service processes	3%	9%	35%	<b>45%</b>	8%
Improving production or service processes	1%	7%	<b>48%</b>	36%	7%
Quality assurance /accreditation	10%	10%	29%	<b>32%</b>	19%
Risk identification and management	4%	8%	24%	<b>48%</b>	15%
Business strategy	4%	11%	<b>37%</b>	<b>37%</b>	12%
Financial management	3%	6%	31%	<b>49%</b>	13%
Legal/regulatory requirements	6%	4%	32%	<b>48%</b>	10%
Marketing	3%	15%	<b>44%</b>	37%	1%
Developing and commercialising new products and services	10%	12%	<b>45%</b>	30%	3%
Information technology applications	2%	19%	<b>40%</b>	35%	5%
Sustainable business practices	3%	18%	<b>38%</b>	35%	5%

**Figure 31:**

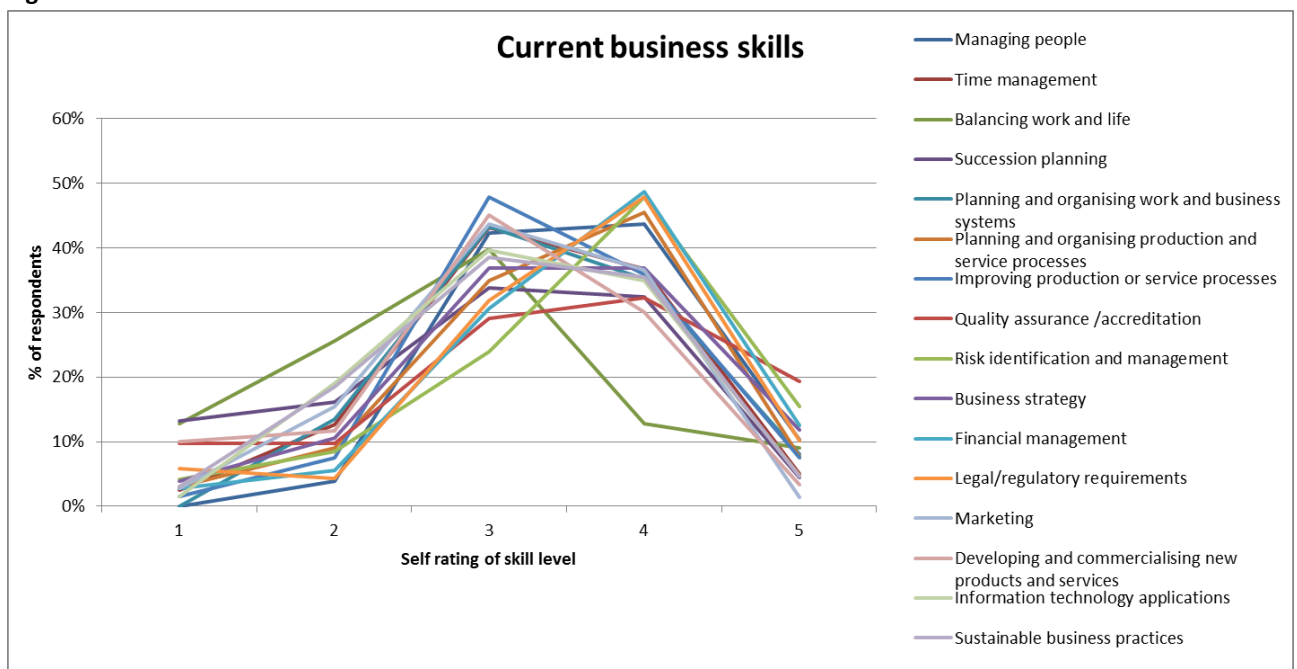


Table 5 shows that respondents have an aspiration to improve their business skills in all areas, with a desire to achieve a very good to excellent rating in almost all skill areas in the next 2 years.

**Table 5: Desired rating of business management skills**

Self rating	1	2	3	4	5
Managing people	0%	0%	1%	37%	<b>61%</b>
Time management	0%	1%	4%	34%	<b>60%</b>
Balancing work and life	0%	1%	9%	30%	<b>60%</b>
Succession planning	3%	0%	5%	37%	<b>56%</b>
Planning and organising work and business systems	0%	0%	2%	37%	<b>76%</b>
Planning and organising production and service processes	0%	0%	2%	25%	<b>73%</b>
Improving production or service processes	0%	0%	3%	31%	<b>66%</b>
Quality assurance /accreditation	2%	2%	5%	26%	<b>65%</b>
Risk identification and management	0%	0%	0%	31%	<b>69%</b>
Business strategy	0%	0%	1%	21%	<b>77%</b>
Financial management	0%	0%	3%	23%	<b>74%</b>
Legal/regulatory requirements	2%	0%	2%	34%	<b>63%</b>
Marketing	0%	0%	6%	23%	<b>71%</b>
Developing and commercialising new products and services	0%	0%	9%	29%	<b>62%</b>
Information technology applications	0%	2%	10%	34%	<b>53%</b>
Sustainable business practices	2%	0%	8%	29%	<b>61%</b>

**Q22: Are you interested in receiving information/training on any of the above?**

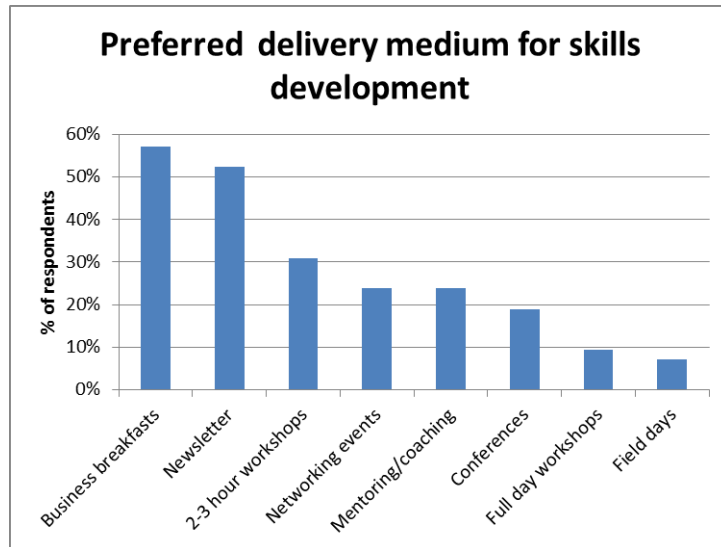
39% (35) of respondents indicated an interest in receiving information or training in the above skills areas.

**Q23: How would you like the information delivered?**

Over half of the respondents to this question indicated they would information and training in the above skills by newsletter, followed by 2-3 hour workshops, networking events, coaching and mentoring and conferences, as shown in Figure 32. Respondent appear to prefer short (half day or less) training opportunities rather than full day or longer. The questionnaire did not test for online training preferences.

6 respondents indicated a preference for training in the mornings, 3 in the evenings, 1 in the afternoon and 2 online (open response).

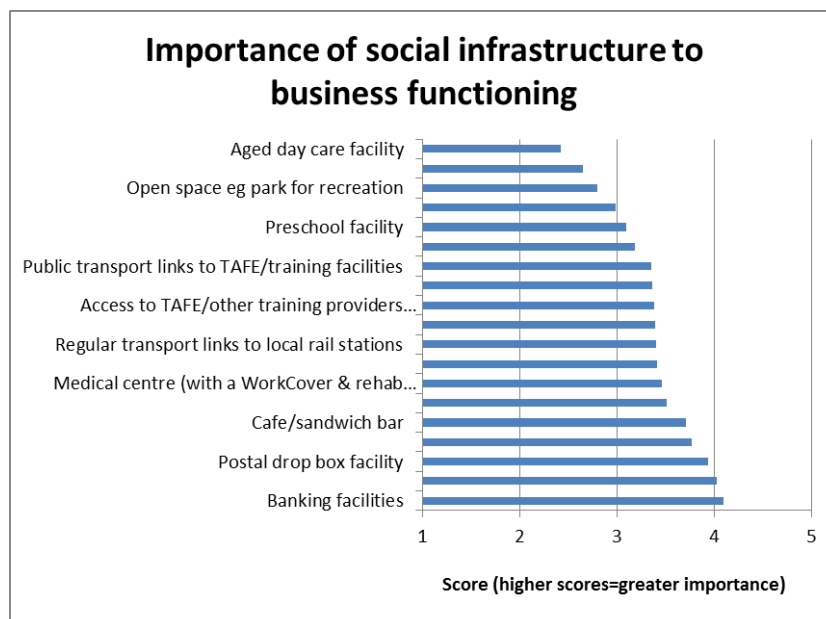
Figure 32:



**Q24: In terms of doing business, how would you rate the importance of the availability of social infrastructure (as listed below) in supporting your business (both employees and employers)?**

The five social infrastructure items ranked as most important generally relate to the day to day needs of business, namely banking, a post office, a postal box, an ambulance services and a café/sandwich shop, as shown in Figure 33 and Table 6. General community social services and facilities, such as aged day care, tended to rank as less important. This may be because of the current male domination of the businesses surveyed, the respondents may tend to source these services in their resident community, which may not be in 2322, or they may take a literal approach to what is meant by “supporting the business”.

Figure 33:



**Table 6: Importance of social infrastructure to business**

<b>Infrastructure item</b>	<b>Average score</b>
Banking facilities	4.09
Post Office	4.02
Postal drop box facility	3.93
Ambulance	3.77
Cafe/sandwich bar	3.71
Grocery store or small supermarket	3.51
Medical centre (with a Work Cover & rehab focus)	3.46
Newsagency	3.41
Regular transport links to local rail stations	3.40
Police	3.39
Access to TAFE/other training providers (nearby: within 10km)	3.38
Medical centre (with allied health services e.g. physio, pathology)	3.36
Public transport links to TAFE/training facilities	3.35
Childcare facilities	3.18
Preschool facility	3.09
Cycleway link to local rail station	2.99
Open space, e.g. park for recreation	2.80
Gym facility	2.65
Aged day care facility	2.42

**Q25: What is your level of satisfaction with the available social infrastructure in the area?**

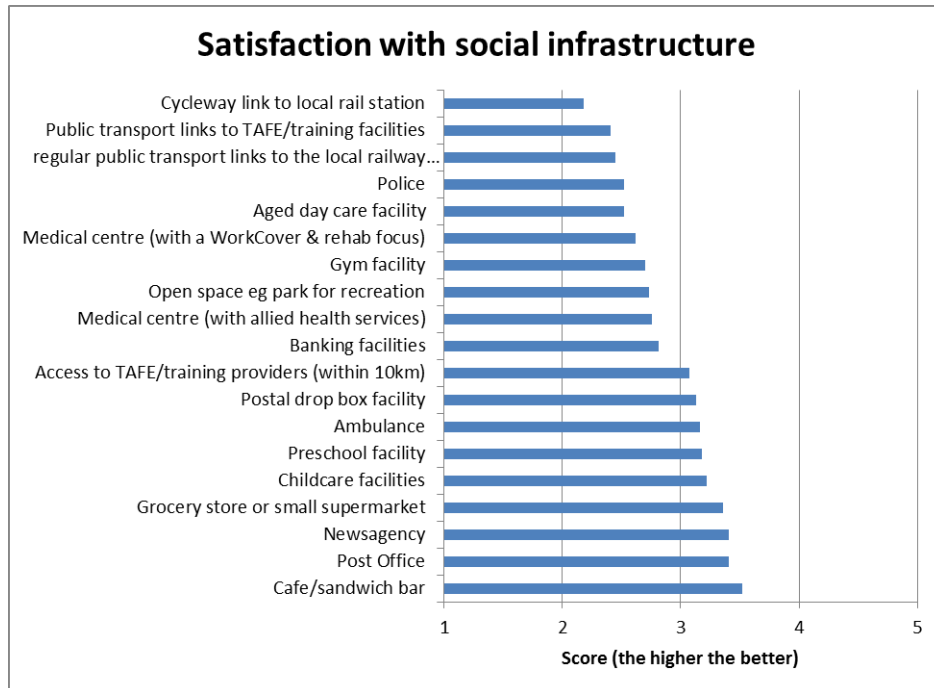
The five highest satisfaction scores were received for:

- café/sandwich bar, post office, newsagency, grocery store/small supermarket, and child care facilities, as shown in Figure 34.

The five lowest satisfaction scores were received for:

- cycleway links to the local railway station, public transport links to the local railway station, regular public transport links to the local railway station, police and aged day care facility.

Figure 34:



### Differences in social infrastructure importance and satisfaction scores

A comparison of the differences between the response to Question 24 (importance) and the response to Question 25 (satisfaction) provides an indication of areas for possible action.

Ideally, the difference between these scores should be minimized, such that the high importance items of social infrastructure achieve a high satisfaction rating.

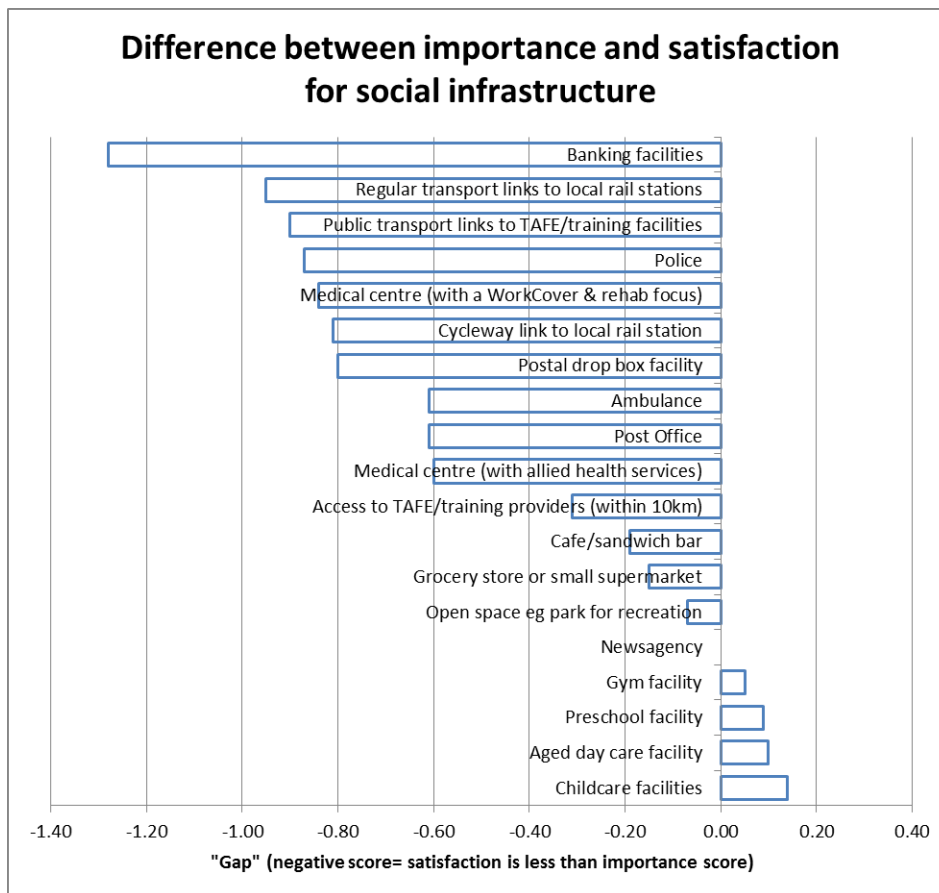
It can be shown in Figure 35 that the five greatest negative differences in the scores (satisfaction is less than importance) are for:

- banking facilities,
- regular public transport links to the railway station, public transport links to TAFE and other training facilities,
- police, and
- a medical centre (with a WorkCover and rehabilitation focus).

The areas where satisfaction scores are less than importance provide an indication of areas where the local business community can increase service levels. Links to railway stations recur as a “gap”.

If these links can be improved to Beresfield railway station, this may also improve business viability in the adjacent town commercial centre. The Thornton shopping is further from the railway station than Beresfield. Similarly increased banking services could be advocated for the commercial/town centres.

Figure 35:



**Q26: Would you be interested in developing stronger links and partnerships between your business and local schools and TAFE in the following areas?**

On average there was only moderate interest in developing stronger links between partnerships between local businesses, schools and TAFE, although at least 20 respondents indicated high to very high interest. Work experience was the area of highest interest, followed by apprentices and trainees.

On average, developing stronger links between partnerships between local businesses, schools and TAFE was seen as of moderate importance, although at least 17 respondents indicated that it was of high to very high importance. Apprenticeship was seen as the area of highest importance, followed by work experience and trainees.

**Q27: Are you willing to participate in a partnership that supports education and skills development, and how important would you see such a partnership in general?**

There was moderate interest in participating in a partnership that supports education and skills development, although at least 16 respondents indicated high to very high interest. The highest interest was partnerships involving young people, followed by mature age people, women returning

to the workforce, Aboriginal people, unemployed people, semi-retired people and people from a non English speaking background.

On average participation in a partnership that supports education and skills development was seen as being of moderate importance, although at least 16 respondents indicated it was of high to very high importance. The most important group was seen as young people, followed by mature aged people, women returning to the workforce, unemployed people, semi-retired, Aboriginal people and people of a non English speaking background.

It should be noted that the scores were within a close band for both interest and importance for the target groups of people.