

Joe McCracken's message to Colac & district businesses

Here are some of the strategies I think are important to ensure we rebuild our local economy and ensure we support job growth:

- Keep rates low. This encourages new businesses to set up whilst not being too much of an impost on existing businesses.
- Ensure that the shire is easy to do business with. NO to reams of paperwork. NO to long winded surveys. YES to keeping things simple, clear, easy to understand and accessible. Business owners are time poor as it is. Lets not add to it.
- Reform the planning department and regulations. Makes it easier and simpler to construct a premises or put up a fence. Also, we need to ensure shire people are trained well in customer service. Residents are customers, not problems to be dealt with.
- Enact the Colac 2050 plan, to ensure more residential land comes available.
- Properly fund our roads. A good example is Forrest St, surrounded by industry and heavy vehicles, yet the road there is poor. Let's support our industry and have good transport links.
- Continue streetscape works, which help lift the image of our town. For example, the CBD works completed in 2018. We need to continue with this work. It helps retailers and hospitality businesses to thrive.
- Maintain public spaces properly. It might seem boring or mundane, but having neat cut grass, pruned trees, accessible public spaces and good playgrounds. This supports families and young people and the livability of our town. This in turn helps improve labour supply, where many local businesses find it difficult to attract employees.
- Consider how we do tourism information centres. We may need to adapt the current model, as many people look online - the market is changing.
- Consider having an RV dump point to tap into the 'grey nomad' market. RV friendly certification isn't overly expensive and the boost to local commerce can be significant.
- Potentially have a discounted rating strategy for new businesses within the Colac Otway Shire who wish to locate themselves in a previously empty location.
- Advocate to the state and federal government for better internet and mobile connectivity. As we have seen in COVID-19 these services are important now more than ever.
- Continue regular meetings with the Chamber of Commerce and Business leaders in the community to better understand how the shire can assist.
- Re-direct the economic development unit in Colac-Otway Shire to work with local business, but also to bring new businesses to our shire.
- Make sure we retain Lake Colac as a focal point for the livability of our town, and as a tourist centre. This could be focussed on water sports, recreational fishing and sport.
- Ensure we invest and maintain our sporting grounds, first to ensure we are livable, but also to attract major events like the football matches in 2018 and 2020.