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**RE Ocean Street Road Closure Trial – Safety, Economic & Cultural Business Feedback**

Dear Hannah,

Below is a summary of the feedback from those businesses who are currently participating in the Ocean Street Road Closure Trial which has been occurring each Friday and Saturday night between 5pm-3am, since 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2016,

The purpose of this MRA initiative has been to determine whether opening up the street to public space would improve the cultural experiences and safety for the wider community as well as bolster the local economy. This is in response to what has been a rapidly transforming entertainment precinct over the last 3 years. Statistics released today by the State Govt. has the Ocean Street Taxi Rank placed as the 4<sup>th</sup> busiest in Queensland.

The feedback below has been collated from Ocean St Trader group meetings, one on one conversations, as well as some written email responses. Unfortunately it is difficult to get written feedback including surveys, it is the nature of the industry – don't want to complete surveys but happy to talk.

The richness in this data comes from the conversation and also observation.

Please contact me with any questions,

Bronwyn Buksh Executive Manager, MRA

The Overall Benefits

- There is 100% support for the road closure and all would like to it continue.
- Vastly improved the street dining experience – street performances instead of car fumes, or car noise and it stops the groups circling in their V8s on Saturday night.
- Bookings are higher for the outdoor seating as opposed to the indoor area – everyone wants to be on the street. It allows people to feel apart of the changing atmosphere, the street busking, the people watching, and what is a very unique public space on the Sunshine Coast.
- Given that the trial began at the beginning of winter it has still generated people. Everyone is eagerly anticipating the popularity of this in summer – ‘a no brainer’...
- It has been difficult for traders to tease out what is the main determining factor that has affected their numbers, as they have fluctuated for some and been constant for others (i.e. closer to Summer pricing). Also the rapid change of Ocean Street each year means the comparative context had changed dramatically.
- Many would like to have Ocean Street closed all the time, day and night, in the future.



#### The Constructive feedback

- The main hurdle for the initiative and uptake by business has been the fact that it is a trial. This has naturally affected the permit processing and costs as well as investment into structures i.e. furniture, staffing, set up and pack down.
- There have been a lot of comments about people wanting to invest in more permanent structures.
- Some venues do not have an appropriate spot outside their venue for extension of dining i.e. telephone box, public seating, bollards, sculptures etc. Raises the question of the changing nature of the street and infrastructure needs and public/private space.
- It is important to note that these issues are far wider than the Road Closure and are general to the whole entertainment precinct.
- The signage on the street, notifying people of the road closure has been very basic and not worked to engage people in what is happening. With permanency, investment can be made to create an engaging and more welcoming signage & communication.
- There has been a lack of resources and a dedicated role to drive the cultural programming each weekend, community participation, placemaking activations and social media/communication.

#### Safety

- State Govt has just released the data that Ocean Street Taxi Rank at the 4<sup>th</sup> busiest in Queensland. This is a significant result, which in itself highlights the changing nature of this area and the need for such forward planning initiatives.
- Police, street traders and the community have all welcomed the additional safety in the street from 5pm and see this as an added bonus to the cultural experience advantages the closure provides.
- Families have been able to eat and have the kids play in the street and later on people leaving the clubs and bars can move along the street with ease.

#### Conclusions

- The MRA is confident that with a permanent road closure the desired cultural economic and safety impact will continue to grow over time.
- The MRA, freed from the expense and management of traffic control and insurance costs and liability will be able to divert energy along with investment from the local traders on the activation components of this initiative – building the urban experiences and attraction for the community.
- As already recognised by the Council, with the recently commenced Ocean St & Duporth Ave Streetscape Renewal Strategy, it will be important to address the streetscaping infrastructure and planning considerations of Ocean Street in the longer term to support such initiatives.
- Local level management is crucial - a dedicated person to curate the activity in the street including extended street dining, acoustic busking, performance art, local school music groups, kids craft etc.