



# MINUTES

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2025 | Cater & Blumer Office | 5.30pm

Meeting Opened at 5.31pm

**Apologies:** Dean Owen, Jason Dossetor

**Attendance:** John Nikolic, Amanda Quarisa, Doug Curran, Manjit Lally Singh, Michael Rowley, Tom Ford, Daniel Roller, Carmel LaRocca.

### 1: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were confirmed as a true and correct record.

**Moved:** John Nikolic

**Seconded:** Daniel Roller

### 2: FINANCIALS

Manjit prepared a P&L for year ending 2025 for committee to review.

**Moved:** Manjit Lally Singh

**Seconded:** John Nikolic

**Term Deposit:** Chamber opted to not roll over the term deposit with Beyond Bank. Enquired with another Member Regional Australia Bank on the best rate they can offer. La Trobe Financial can offer a variable rate of 6.25%. Committee decided via email to invest with La Trobe Financial.

**Motion:** To invest \$100,000 into a 12 month Term Deposit with La Trobe Financial and reinvest interest into Term Deposit.

**Moved:** Daniel Roller

**Seconded:** Carmel LaRocca

Motion carried

Manjit to coordinate paperwork.

Amanda provided an update on membership renewals.

### 3: AGENDA

#### **3.1: Business Awards Wrap Up / Attendance to Regional Awards**

The committee provided feedback on the 2025 Business Awards.

Successful event. Record Nominations of 50 for 5 of the Aligned Awards.

Feedback was too many awards and crowd lost interest, lots of talking, sponsors videos were interrupted by talking.

MC Luke Santolin was great. Did a fantastic job.

Venue was excellent- easy to deal with.

Tables needed to be round, not long and a little squashy. People prefer to sit in a round table, found it unsociable.

Speeches at the start were too long - needed to talk more about what Chamber do ie: employment expo, become a member, get involved.

Overlooked invitation to invite Helen Dalton & Sussan Ley

No need for a dance floor.

Rushed the night to have more networking, but people leave straight after awards were over.

Sponsors of local awards would have liked to present an award

Need a family business of the year or some other bigger local award

As there was no gift for attendee's, need more giveaways.

Discussed the possibility of running the awards yearly. Amanda expressed concern on how much work it takes to run yearly and is quite intensive. Also the uptake of people entering reduces as they feel they 'just entered' or 'they'll give it a miss this year'. Bi-annual works well, as the submission details are somewhat the same if it's yearly. Bi-annually businesses have more to include in their submission.

Suggested a less formal, quick, online type of local awards to run. Further discussions to be held.

**Regional Awards Attendance:** Committee discussed who will attend the event on 19<sup>th</sup> September. Amanda Quarisa and Daniel Roller will attend and represent Chamber. Chamber to pay for tickets of Exec members only.

### **3.2: DAMA Update**

A recent enquiry from a member on how to get an occupation added to the DAMA list was denied. Home Affairs are not adding new occupations, as they are still talking to the NSW Government about a statewide model. Our member was extremely frustrated with RDA that this was not advised before they spent time and money on a labour market testing.

Griffith Business Chamber strongly oppose a statewide model. The Chamber sent a submission in regards to a *Feasibility study into expansion of Orana DAMA*. This has also been circulated to Helen Dalton Member for Murray and Sussan Ley Member for Farrer.

**Copy of Submission over page.**

30 May 2025

NSW Government  
Investment NSW

By email: [regional.migration@investment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:regional.migration@investment.nsw.gov.au).

Dear Madam / Sir

**Feasibility study into expansion of Orana DAMA**

We refer to the feasibility study into an expanded Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA). We understand that the NSW Government has proposed that the existing Orana DAMA managed by Regional Development Australia (RDA) Orana (including Orana, Central West, Southern Inland, Murray and Riverina RDA areas) be expanded to include all of NSW.

Griffith is the second largest contributor to the Murray-Darling Basin's economy,<sup>i</sup> with an extremely large export-facing agribusiness and manufacturing sector. However, Griffith's growth is currently constrained by a lack of available labour – our local economy is currently beyond full employment, with unemployment at 2.3 percent.<sup>ii</sup> As detailed in the ABC *Four Corners* report, *Left to Rot*, Griffith 'tells you everything you need to know about Australia's worker shortage crisis'.<sup>iii</sup>

The Griffith Business Chamber strongly opposes the proposed expansion of the existing Orana DAMA, which would further exacerbate workforce shortages in Griffith and regional NSW. If the Orana DAMA is to be expanded, we submit that it should only be expanded to other inland regional areas, such as the Northern Inland RDA area and the Far West RDA area, where similar workforce constraints apply.

By uniformly applying the Orana DAMA to all of NSW, the proposed expansion of the Orana DAMA is contrary to the principles of a designated area migration agreement. DAMAs are intended to provide for a bespoke skilled migration list reflecting the unique skills shortages faced in a particular geographical area, such as Griffith, rather than those being experienced in coastal urban centres.

DAMAs are also a critical mechanism for regional recruitment, as they leverage key drivers within our immigration system, including by providing:

- a) Regional employers with a broader recruitment pool, through exemptions in relation to age limits (55 rather than 45 years of age) English literacy tests and other matters; and

- b) Employees with greater incentives to migrate to regional areas, particularly through better pathways to permanent residency.

If the Orana DAMA was expanded to cover all of NSW, it would undermine the comparative advantage provided to regional inland areas such as Griffith when competing for labour, particularly against coastal urban areas which have geographical and economic drivers which naturally attract workers in greater numbers.

For the above reasons, the Griffith Business Chamber submits that the proposed expansion of the Orana DAMA is not feasible, if the intention of the Orana DAMA is to increase the supply of labour to where it is needed most.

Kind regards,



John Nikolic  
President  
**Griffith Business Chamber**  
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0413 978 387

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<sup>i</sup> Murray-Darling Basin Authority, *Murray Darling Basin Social and Economic Conditions Report 2022*, page 12 ([Murray-Darling Basin Social and Economic Conditions report 2022 \(mdba.gov.au\)](https://www.mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/murray-darling-basin-social-and-economic-conditions-report-2022.pdf) <https://www.mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/murray-darling-basin-social-and-economic-conditions-report-2022.pdf> accessed 30 May 2025).

<sup>ii</sup> For the December 2024 quarter: id Consulting Pty Ltd (<https://economy.id.com.au/griffith/unemployment>) (accessed 30 May 2025).

<sup>iii</sup> ABC News, *Left to Rot*, 17 October 2022 (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-17/worker-shortage-griffith-four-corners/100071304>) (accessed 30 May 2025).

### 3.3: Water Policy Update

Murray Darling Association are hosting a National Conference in Griffith in September. It would be very beneficial for representative of Griffith Business Chamber to attend.

**Motion:** Griffith Business Chamber to pay for 2 tickets for John Nikolic and Jason Dossetor to attend the Conference.

**Moved:** Manjit Lally Singh

**Seconded:** Michael Rowely

### 3.4: Chamber-Council collaborations and upcoming initiatives/projects/funding

Tom Ford provided an update on his discussions with Karly Sivewright from Griffith City Council. Tom to continue open dialogue with Karly.

- Griffith Investment Prospectus 2025 is now published – [online here](#)

- Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025 -2030 – going to Council for public exhibition
- Griffith Housing Strategy 2025 – submission report going to Council
- Griffith Business Survey – Chamber and Council to collaborate and review questions and align with Business NSW survey.
- Council Small Business Grant (\$15,000 available). Chamber to consider partnering with Council to help fund and be a part of the Grant scheme.
- Economic data Update – asked Council for monthly or bi-monthly economic data email to be distributed to Business Chamber members, discussing one economic theme per email. Spendmapp subscription renewal under consideration with Council. More follow up required.
- RDA Jobs Riverina-Murray Website. Chamber to assist in promotion where possible.
- Social media promotion. Chamber need to become better at promoting ourselves and the work we do. Need ALL committee members to actively be involved in this. Amanda to provide a tutorial on how to use social media. Encouraging people to become a member of Chamber who we can delegate specific roles to help spread the workload.
- RDA Grow Your Own - Next meeting December 2025. Hoping some Chamber executive members can attend.

### 3.5: Events / Presentations

#### August

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Information session in Griffith on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August at 2:00pm at the Gem Hotel

#### September

Drop in Drinks Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 5.30pm at The Gem. Amanda to purchase antipasto platter.

#### October

Employment Expo – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2025. Going well so far. Sourced funding from Workforce Australia for Buses for Schools. Amanda proposed additional funding from Chamber to assist. Amount TBC upon another discussion with Workforce Australia. Committee agreed in principle. Will send an email to committee confirming amount and will decide via email.

#### November

AGM & Christmas Party. Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November. Griffith Leagues Club or Exies Sporties. TBC.

### 3.6: Chamber Promotions

**By Local Gift Card** – still waiting on grant funding.

**Buy Local Campaign Initiative.** Committee agreed to set a budget of \$1000 per month for November & December to promote our message of Live Local. Love Local. Support Local.

Radio also have an initiative coming soon regarding Support Local. More information to come. Explore main street speakers and broadcasting Triple M or Hit 99.7.

#### Website

Manjit to present website solutions. TBC. Not extremely urgent to upgrade, but does need attention.

#### Newsletter / EDMs

EDMs can be challenging to send, particularly when urgent information needs to be communicated immediately and cannot wait for inclusion in the newsletter. Griffith City Council produce an excellent economic newsletter, and Amanda and Karly collaborate closely, sharing information on a regular basis. The Chamber, however, needs to be more active on social media to promote our activities.

**Central Plaza Digital signage** – Gawk Media are happy to run some no charge spots to promote the **Live Local. Love Local. Support Local** message from the launch of the billboard (22<sup>nd</sup> September). We would also like to join the Chamber in some capacity.

#### **4. GENERAL BUSINESS**

The FREE Business Connect program delivered Enterprise Plus on behalf of the NSW Government is being defunded—a decision that will bring an end to the free, independent, and tailored advice that has supported thousands of small businesses across NSW. Through this service, eligible businesses were able to get free, one-on-one tailored business advice from independent advisers.

In its place will be a generic, scripted concierge service, with fewer resources, reduced support, and no personalised follow-up.

Chamber were asked to submit feedback which Amanda did.

#### **5. NEW MEMBERS**

Welcome to the following new members

Valentine Modes

Collectiv. Accounting

Advanced Personnel Management ( APM )

Tegan Summers The Small Business Coach

Griffith Panel and Paint

Cassandra Irvin Functional Health Pty Ltd

The Pioneers Lodge

Hanwood Football Club Incorporated

Multiquip Poultry Pty Ltd

Paul Coffee Importer Agent

**Meeting Closed 7.00pm**

*Minute Secretary: Amanda Quarisa*