



Economic Development

Productive ▶ Shoalhaven



For more than 30 years, Greg Pullen has been the face of business development in the Shoalhaven.

When Greg started his role as Shoalhaven City Council's Economic Development Manager in 1985, he was planning on staying five years.

But like many others who move to the region, Mr Pullen fell in love with its lifestyle and the community.

"The benefit of the area is the lifestyle - the climate is fantastic, the coastal environment is fantastic," he said.

"We have the escarpment on one side and the beach and coast on the other side. The Shoalhaven is a long spine with lots of villages running off it that are very attractive for people to live in and to commute to Nowra or Ulladulla for work. The lifestyle is the number one thing here."

Mr Pullen's role is to stimulate the local economy by increasing infrastructure and creating jobs by helping businesses to grow and expand.

"Shoalhaven has a very diverse economy - it's beautiful in nature, and there is a lot of vibrancy in the economy," he said.

"The two biggest sectors are manufacturing and defence support services, which generate a lot of value for the local economy. They employ a lot of people and are a high generator of income.

"The region is quite metropolitan in nature. The education sector is strong, as is health and we're noted for tourism, being only an easy day trip from Sydney and we have lots of holiday makers from Sydney, Canberra and Victoria.

"Education facilities are continually growing in the area, we have a Nowra campus of the University of Wollongong, TAFE campuses at Nowra and Ulladulla and a range of great government and non-government primary and secondary schools.

"The roads have been upgraded in recent times, we now have a four-lane road from Nowra to Sydney. South of Nowra the roads will be improved over the next few years to cater for industrial and commuter traffic."

Mr Pullen said there was very little staff turnover in the region's businesses, simply because people were happy and content to live and work here.

"The Shoalhaven has a strong skill base of workers, a lot who have moved here from other areas. Our businesses are very good at training people in a range of skills and if skills are required and they're not here, businesses just put an ad in the paper and people come here because they want to live and work here," he said.

The region is home to many businesses that are export-oriented.

"The transport network is here, we're close to Port Kembla and Mascot and we have daily freight runs to Victoria, South Australia and Queensland," Mr Pullen said.

"There are many businesses that are satisfying markets regionally, State-wide and right around the world. Some companies export to 25 countries - it can all be done from the Shoalhaven."

Mr Pullen and his team offer support, development opportunities and a wealth of knowledge to new and existing businesses, as well as providing networking functions to bring together business people from all sectors.

Council assists the Shoalhaven Professional Business Association with funding and coordinates business training on a variety of topics, including social media, marketing, and accounting.

Council is also a major developer of industrial employment land.

"We have about 300 businesses in industrial estates employing between 2000-3000 people. We're about getting jobs for the area, not just servicing a block of land."

Mr Pullen strongly encourages new businesses to come to the region and see what's on offer.

"Businesses will help you by sharing their experiences - even competitors help each other out.

"Life here is no different to metropolitan areas - we've got the same shops and services, but the cost of living is so much cheaper."

When Mr Pullen does decide to call it a day and retire, he will do so happy in the knowledge that the three goals he had when he arrived in town have been met.

"I wanted to get tertiary education into the area, to have a road built across the escarpment to the Hume Highway and to see a growth in industrial sectors, especially in defence and defence support services - they've all been achieved."

