



Theme 3 Prosper – a smart, innovative and resilient economy  
Objective 12 – A smart, innovative and resilient industry sector  
Strategy 12.1 – Attract and grow strategic investment

Delivery Program 2018/19 to 2021/22		Year 3 Operational Plan	
Ref	Action	Project/service	Measure
12.12	Undertake refurbishment of the Central Business District <b>How much? What does it seek to achieve?</b>	Project planning completed and delivery to project and timeframes. <b>What is the project? This is at odds with the statement in the report that says - CBD upgrade has included reference to FutureCity as the working title which has been deferred for one year pending a decision on grant funding</b>	Project completed <b>What is the project? This claims that it will be completed by 30th June 2021</b>

Strategy 12.2 – Support innovative industry sectors

Delivery Program 2018/19 to 2021/22		Year 3 Operational Plan	
Ref	Action	Project/service	Measure
12.2.1	Facilitate industry engagement <b>What does this aim to achieve?</b>	Measure number of meetings/events hosted and attended with members of the Orange business sector	Number of meetings/ events <b>This measures activity not results.</b>

The Operational Plan does have a section on Levels of Service, which is a good idea, because the community may want to reduce some levels of service to reduce costs, or in other cases, increase levels of service to better serve some sections of the community. The information is very interesting in setting out the details of Council services, for example, Community Services, how frequently parks are mowed etc. It would be more helpful if there was a clear link from this information to the Measures column in the Operational Plan. However, there may be some inaccuracy in the information provided. For example, the first service level given is that the service provided by Council – elected members is one Council meeting a month. I thought there were 2 Council meetings a month, and many community committee meetings, workshops etc.

The draft Operational Plan still does not include **a map showing where the various rates will apply within the local government area**. It is mandatory for a map to accompany the exhibition of the draft Operational Plan. The report to Council gives no details about how the exhibition will be conducted to encourage community engagement, which is very disappointing.

It is important that members of the community take an interest and make submissions about the draft Operational Plan and budget as part of ensuring accountability and getting the best out of our councils. I am happy to assist members of the community to make submissions.



I have received feedback that many people find my columns in OC Life informative and I am happy to receive comments from readers about this column and other issues you would like me to cover so please either contact me at Orange City Life or [aes@amandaspaldingconsulting.com](mailto:aes@amandaspaldingconsulting.com)

NEWSWATCH ROLL OF HONOUR

BLOWES CLOTHING

Newswatch is proud to add this spectacular local business in our Roll of Honour.

by JONATHAN ROE

The past few years have been tough for many brick and mortar retailers around Australia, but iconic central west business Blowes Clothing have not only shown they can survive in these tough conditions, they have expanded and thrived.

Founded in Mudgee in 1936, Blowes Clothing is a family-operated business with 29 staff across five stores, located in Mudgee, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga.

At the helm since 2002 is Aaron Blowes, the third-generation of the family to work in the business.

While clothing retailers, large and small, have been struggling to compete with online sellers, Blowes have shown continued growth. They even opened their fifth store in Wagga Wagga just three years ago, while franchises and department stores around Australia were closing or downsizing.

Aaron attributes their success to a focus on customer service, something he says has been lost in many modern department stores.

“Where a lot of the retail environment, in our industry in particular, have gone away from service, from really looking after the customers, we’ve done the opposite,” said Aaron.

“We have a high level of staff for each of our shops and managers, assistant managers. In Orange alone we’ve got seven full-time staff on the floor, so we are really engaging with the customer and listening to what they want and how they want to shop and we try to provide that for them.”

Product choice is important too, says Aaron. At Blowes, he says, they make a point to stock known, quality brands as he believes their customers are willing to pay more, because they know that they are getting value for money.

“Nowadays, there is a lot of vertically integrated retailers and it’s all a lot of disposable product and hard to really get a gauge on what the value is, because it is their own brand. I think the majority of consumers out there are happy to pay a bit extra to get a quality product,” he said.

“You come into our shops and you see Ralph Lauren, Gant, RM Williams, Tommy Hilfiger, Levi, Akubra, brands you associate with quality and know you are going to get what you paid for.”

Blowes’ range of products includes everything from workwear to suiting, which also appeals to their customer base, said Aaron.

“It is about making it easy for the customer, particularly men, because they don’t enjoy shopping. You go into those department stores for a pair of jeans and you have to walk your way around the whole floor to try and find each individual supplier to try stuff on, but if you come into a store like ours you have multiple brands, you can go into a changeroom and try on from numerous brands.

“So, if you can make it easy for them, they are going to be happy and potentially be a multi-purchase buyer and then next time they think of clothing they will come back.”

Ten years, Blowes ventured into online selling through their own website. What started small has now become a significant and growing part of their business.

“Online has been huge as well for us and growing. It is probably about 15 percent of our business and we do a lot through social and third-party platforms as well like eBay and Amazon. There are lots of little avenues and channels out there that you can really market your business. So if you are on your game, I think there are plenty of opportunities out there, it is just a matter of embracing them and having a crack.”

The coronavirus pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for retailers, but with restrictions easing and a little light at the end of the tunnel, Aaron believes there could be a silver lining for businesses like his.

“I think it will be very positive on the other side,” he said. “I’m only speaking for us, but even now we are getting phone calls and online enquiries asking are we an Australian business and people wanting to identify with Australian products like RM Williams and Akubra. So, people are very conscious to be shopping local and supporting local businesses.

“We do very well out of the tourism market with Food Week and Orange360 driving city customers to the Orange and with international travel potentially a long way away, once things open up I think we are going to see more and more people from city areas come out here. So, fingers crossed, I think it could be very positive for a lot of country towns.”