

3 July 2025

General Manager
Paul.bennet@tamworth.nsw.gov.au
Tamworth Regional Council
437 Peel Street
Tamworth NSW 2340

Dear General Manager,

Re: Submission on the 2025 Tamworth Country Music Festival

Tamworth Business Chamber, on behalf of our members would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the entire team involved in the delivery of the 2025 Tamworth Country Music Festival. We also acknowledge Council's effort to seek formal feedback from the business community, a critical step in ensuring the Festival continues to deliver tangible value to the region.

The Tamworth Business Chamber strongly supports the Festival as a cornerstone of our region's economic and cultural identity. It remains a flagship event that not only contributes directly to the viability of businesses across numerous sectors including hospitality, retail, accommodation, and entertainment, but also indirectly supports a broader cross-section of the community. The Festival is vital to the ongoing prosperity of Tamworth and plays a leading role in promoting our event economy at a national level.

Following the 2025 festival, the Chamber undertook a process of engaging with local businesses following the 2025 Festival. This submission reflects the collective insights and concerns raised by our members, that warrant action by Council in the planning and operation of future events.

Overall feedback and festival sentiment

There is strong consensus among our members that the 2025 Festival delivered a vibrant atmosphere and attracted a noticeable number of first-time visitors. Business owners reported increased foot traffic and praised improvements in logistics and entertainment programming. Some operators shared that this was the strongest Festival trading period they had experienced in more than a decade.

However, alongside this positivity, several issues were raised by our members.

Key Issues Raised by Members

1. Privately owned tourist attractions

Members called for greater focus on integrating and promoting Tamworth's privately owned tourism attractions as part of the Festival's broader offering. These attractions must

be proactively included in the Festivals official marketing, visitor communication and event programming.

2. **Peel Street stall configurations**

Businesses along Peel Street expressed frustration with the layout of casual stalls, which in many instances obstructed their shopfronts and hindered visibility and customer access. This layout must prioritise permanent business visibility.

3. **Communication with Council during the event**

Many business owners experienced difficulty contacting Council during the Festival to resolve operational concerns. A centralised communication point with contact information provided to business operators, preferably with a designated hotline or representative, is required to improve outcomes.

4. **Busker congestion**

Numerous comments highlighted an excessive number of buskers on Peel Street, with many positioned too closely together. This created noise conflicts and diminished the visitor experience, as well as impacted surrounding businesses. A clearer, more strategic allocation of busking locations is needed.

5. **Lack of amenities on Peel Street**

There was an insufficient number of public toilets and baby changing facilities along Peel Street. This was cited repeatedly, particularly by families and hospitality venues managing overflow patron needs and must be rectified with additional accessible amenities.

6. **Security contact information**

Businesses were unaware of how to contact the Festival's private security personnel, making it difficult to report incidents or seek assistance. Clear signage or direct contact information should be made available next year.

7. **Increase in antisocial behaviour**

Several concerning incidents were reported in connection with a particular food stall operator that appeared to attract and encourage antisocial behaviour among groups of youths. A thorough review of stallholder conduct is required and a formal code of behaviour for vendors implemented.

Business readiness and capacity building

One of the most critical takeaways from our post-Festival engagement is that many local businesses are not fully equipped to capitalise on the economic opportunities the Festival presents. It has become clear that increasing foot traffic is only part of the equation, maximising customer conversion and visitor spend requires specific business readiness skills.

In this regard, the Chamber is calling for a **reinstatement and enhancement of the 'Festival Ready' program**, previously delivered by Council. We strongly advocate for a collaborative approach in developing a refreshed program that could include:

- Festival Information Pack that includes information about road closures, what to expect, who to contact if issues arise
- Marketing and promotional toolkits tailored for festival trading
- Customer engagement and merchandising workshops for high-traffic trade periods
- Training in pop-up retailing and festival-specific service strategies
- Access to data and insights to help businesses prepare for changing visitor profiles

We believe this initiative can significantly enhance the capacity of our business community to convert foot traffic into tangible commercial success, making the Festival an even greater economic driver for the region.

Closing comments and future partnership

Tamworth Business Chamber remains committed to working collaboratively with Tamworth Regional Council to ensure the continued success of the Tamworth Country Music Festival. We believe the feedback outlined in this submission will strengthen the event's economic footprint, and operational efficiency.

We welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss how these improvements can be implemented collaboratively ahead of the 2026 Festival.

Yours sincerely,

**MARTIN HOWES**

Vice President

Tamworth Business Chamber