Report on
Parramatta CBD Business Census Research 2008
for Parramatta City Council

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Executive summary

Parramatta City Council commissioned the University of Western Sydney to develop a reliable business register with selected business information to assist in promoting the local government area (LGA) to potential investors and understanding the needs of local business. Focussing on businesses within the Parramatta CBD, the project fulfilled four objectives:

1. identify individual businesses
2. develop database to manage the information
3. identify strengths and weaknesses within the business sector; assist with planning for the CBD and facilitate improved communication with business
4. collate responses, analyse the data, and report the results to Council.

Details such as trading name, company name, parent key, ABN/ACN/BN, postal address, street address, phone, facsimile, website, contact person and email address were obtained for 1,478 businesses in the Parramatta CBD.

The online database was designed using a minimalist style, layout and functionality to facilitate intuitive usage, with username and password protection limiting access to authorised personnel. The database features three optional navigation methods, with the ability to upload Excel files to the platform, undertake searches based on column headings or text search terms, view and edit details of any firm, and generate reports quickly and efficiently. In addition, the database allows automated checking of addresses, email addresses and ABNs, and automatic validation of addresses by alignment of state, postcode and suburb.

The self-reporting survey instrument produced 173 usable responses, representing a response rate of 12%. The survey consisted of three sections: (i) demographic questions relating to the size, age and turnover of the business and role of the respondent, (ii) a 5-point Likert scale investigating preferred channel of obtaining business information, issues of managing business and local business needs, perceptions of Parramatta City Council and preferred contact methods, and (iii) request for respondents to identify three important issues that council could improve.

Four types of analysis were undertaken: (i) reliability test of the using the Cronbach Alpha with the test value set above 0.70, (ii) descriptive analysis of the respondent's' demographic characteristics, (iii) analysis of response data to identify statically significant constructs where mean scores value were 3.00 and above, and (iv) non-parametric independent t-test and ANOVA test to examine if the responses given by different demographic groups were statistically significant.

Most of the respondents are operating micro-sized business with more than 10 years of business experience, and an annual turnover of less than $1 million. Respondents are mostly owners, with employees forming the rest of the sample.

Respondents' most common channels for obtaining business information are internet, industry association, colleagues, business and trade publications, national newspapers and accountants. Important issues in managing their business are retaining and finding suitable staff, complying with local government requirements, and obtaining local and Australian economic data. In terms of local business issues, most respondents consider Parramatta a good place to do business, with adequate public transport, and they are interested in business sustainability and CSR programs. Preferred communication methods are e-mail or direct mail, rather than telephone. Finally, suggested improvements for Parramatta concern car parking, city conditions, public transport and traffic flow.

Differences between demographic groups are significant in terms of channels to obtain business information, issues in managing business and local business issues. Businesses with annual turnover of less than $1 million prefer to obtain business information from the internet, industry associations and business and trade publications. Employees are more concerned than owner-

managers with compliance with local government requirements. Micro-sized firms are more concerned with finding and retaining suitable staff. Finally, employees – rather than owner-managers – and businesses established for more than 10 years are more likely to be interested in corporate social responsibility programs.

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Background

Parramatta City Council and the University of Western Sydney identified the need for a current reliable business register with selected business information to assist in promoting the local government area (LGA) to potential investors and understanding the needs of local business. A number of large businesses also identified a lack of business intelligence about the local area.

Discussions at Business Development Forums held this year with various business development agencies, including University of Western Sydney (UWS), New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD), NSW Premiers Department, Parramatta Chamber of Commerce, Western Sydney Business Connection (WSBC), Business Advisory Services (BASI), NSW Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and the NSW Business Chamber, identified the need for a universal understanding of the business mix in Western Sydney and a means of communicating with them.

Each organisation has its own limited database, but would like to explore opportunities to interrogate and cleanse the data, identify gaps and, if possible, share data without contravening privacy legislation.

Current frustrations expressed by all stakeholders included:

- old data
- cost of updating/maintaining database
- gaps in data
- privacy legislation restricting sharing of data
- inability to efficiently contact firms in Parramatta's CBD.

Thus, it was decided that a pilot study of the businesses operating in Parramatta's CBD should be undertaken. The University of Western Sydney was identified as the preferred organisation to undertake the study due to its independence, capacity to undertake the necessary work and the opportunity for students to be involved in an engaged 'real-life' research project.

Aim

This project investigated and identified businesses within the Parramatta CBD and assessed their attitudes in key areas of economic development.

Objectives

This research project had four objectives:

1. identify individual businesses within Parramatta's CBD
2. develop database to manage the information
3. survey business within the Parramatta CBD to identify strengths and weaknesses within the business sector; assist with planning for the CBD and facilitate improved communication with business
4. collate responses, analyse data and provide report to Council.

Parramatta City overview[1]

In Australia, Parramatta's regional economy is superseded in size by only Sydney and Melbourne. Parramatta is the economic centre of the Western Sydney region, which represents approximately 10% of the national economy.

Parramatta has numerous advantages for business. A growing population, increasing numbers of jobs and commercial floorspace, coupled with easy accessibility by road, rail and ferry, suggest that recent expansion of both government and private sectors will continue. The presence of government departments in the city has increased by 15% since 1996, and is expected to continue with decentralisation an ongoing state government strategy to alleviate growing transport problems associated with the Sydney CBD. Government presence is an important contributor to the regional economy, as each government-funded position creates two jobs in the private sector.

Parramatta's large skilled workforce are scattered over a number of industries. It is the second-largest legal precinct in Australia, with 25 law courts and over 250 legal firms. Parramatta's office space market is the third largest in NSW, offering both ample space and affordability. The city offers competitively priced commercial property of all types, with office space increasing by 65% in the last seven years. The dominant sector in the CDB, the financial industry, has grown by 30% in the last decade. The retail sector and the café industry have grown during the same period by 9% and almost 7%, respectively.

The region's importance is expected to increase from its current economic output of over $10 billion, with predictions of 250,000 new jobs in Western Sydney and 30,000 in Parramatta itself over the next 25 years.

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[1] http://www.parracity.nsw.gov.au/business/about_parramatta

Method

The research was broken into four phases. The first phase identified the businesses in Parramatta's CBD. Council defined the street blocks and buildings via their geographic information system and provided a detailed map to ensure complete coverage of the CBD. Buildings were canvassed to identify and collect details of individual businesses (see *Field Contact Record*, Appendix 2).

The second phase built a database to store, manage and produce reports from the information generated in Phase 1. The database, developed to provide a user-friendly data entry and query interface, performs the following functions:

- research the current input data structures from various sources and their requirements
- develop a generic master database to accommodate the diversity of input data format and standardise the properties and attributes for the overall integration
- develop a validation schema to minimise human errors
- identify potential business applications and linkages to the existing systems to maximise the benefits of the master database capability.

The third phase of the research surveyed local businesses. The survey items were derived from an assessment of council's needs and ongoing discussions between PCC and UWS. The *survey instrument* (Appendix 3), *introduction letter* (Appendix 4), *request for further information* (Appendix 5), and self-addressed return envelope were hand delivered to the businesses within Parramatta CBD.

The final phase of the research was to transcribe the survey responses, analyse the results and provide a report to Council. Completed and returned surveys were transcribed onto an Excel spreadsheet for data analysis, with individual responses de-identified at this stage. Analysis used SPSS software to identify trends, correlations and items of significance based upon demographic classification.

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Findings and Results

This section describes how the project fulfilled the four research objectives.

Objective 1: Identifying individual businesses in Parramatta

Canvassing of the Parramatta CBD identified 1,478 businesses, providing details of their trading name, company name, parent key, ABN/ACN/BN, postal address, street address, phone, facsimile, website, contact person and email address. Where field records were incomplete, data were sourced the YellowPages, WhitePages, Australian Securities and Investment Commission and by phone canvassing. Street addresses were matched to the parent key as supplied by Parramatta City Council (PCC). All avenues of obtaining information were explored; however, some data were not publicly available or were withheld by the firms (such as the contact person in the firm).

Objective 2: Developing a database

An online database was developed to manage the information collected in Phase 1; see www.pccdatabases.com. The user interface was designed using a minimalist style, layout and functionality to facilitate intuitive usage. The log-in page is illustrated in Screen Grab 1.

Screen Grab 1 – Log-in page
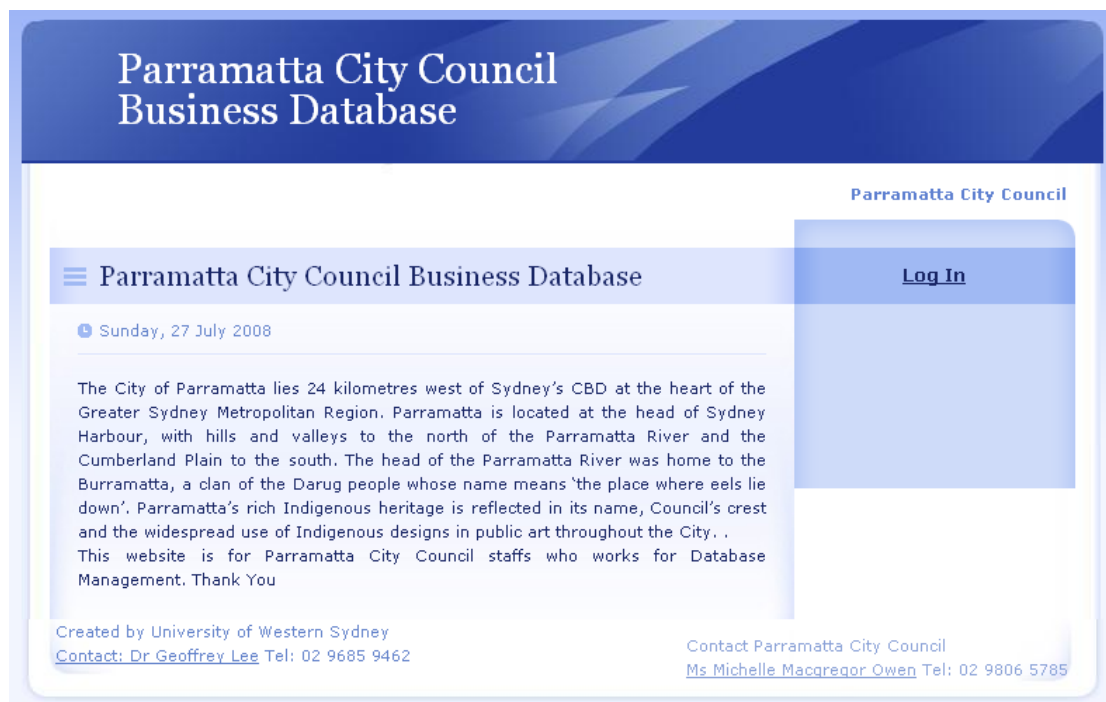
The online platform features user name and password protection to limit access to authorised personnel. Once logged in, users have access to total functionality of the system on the home page (Screen Grab 2). Users have three optional navigation methods: function tabs under the top banner; bread-crumb trail under tabs; and list of functions 1−5.

Screen Grab 2 – Home page

The first function of the database is the ability to upload Excel files to the platform (Screen Grab 3). The system features automated matching of similar column headings from the uploaded file to the online database. When imported column names are dissimilar to the online databases, users can either manually match the new columns to the existing column names or create a new column in the online database. The processes uses drop-down menus to minimise human error in the matching process.

Screen Grab 3 – Upload files

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The search function page allows users to search the database based upon column heading (using drop-down menu) and text search term. Screen Grab 4 illustrates the search function using the column heading SUBURB and the keyed in search term 'parra'. This search resulted in 1,455 records, with text matches based upon full or parts of keyed search terms. These records are displayed by trading name, contact, suburb and phone number.

Screen Grab 4 – Search function

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At this point, users can view and edit the full details of the firm by clicking on the 'Full Record' link (Screen Grab 5). All records for the firm are displayed for inspection or modification.

Screen Grab 5 – Full record page

Various reports can be quickly and efficiently generated by clicking on the reports page (Screen Grab 6). A three-stage process allows users to first select the preferred type of report (email list, postal address list, list physical address list, phone list or full details). Then, the user selects the search criteria (street, postcode, suburb, state, or industry). Finally, users key in the search term and press the 'search' button.

Screen Grab 6 – Reports page

Commercial in Confidence

The results of an email report generated by 'street' and 'church' is displayed in Screen Grab 7. At this point the user has the options to save the list of records as an Excel file, CSV file or CSV file with email addresses only.

Screen Grab 7 – Email list

The validation page allows the automated checking of addresses, email addresses and ABNs (Screen Grab 8). Addresses are validated for alignment of state, postcode and suburb through drop down menus. Email addresses are validated against typical email formats or if there is no email attached to the record. ABNs are validated for currency against the Australian Business Register. Invalid records are displayed for manual updating.

Screen Grab 8 – Validation page

The 'Modify Page' allows users to search for a record based upon a keyed-in text search term. Matching records are displayed in tables allowing users to click through to the full record for editing.

Screen grab 9 – Modify page

Commercial in Confidence

Objective 3: Survey of business in Parramatta's CBD

The survey instrument was developed in consultation with several academics and officers from the Economic Development Unit at Parramatta City Council. The hand-delivered survey to businesses in Parramatta's CBD had two aims:

- to evaluate the opinions and preferences of businesses owners and managers on:
  - preferred channels for obtaining business information
  - issues in managing business
  - local business issues
  - Parramatta City Council's communications
  - preferred contact methods
  - suggested improvements for Parramatta.

- to empirically examine response differences in demographic groups.

A 12% response rate was obtained, with 173 usable responses returned via the self-addressed envelope. Although the response rate is deemed low, exploratory business studies with lower than 20% response rates can be viable[2]. Our experience shows that response rates of 8−10% are common for similar business surveys and therefore these results are slightly better than similar surveys using mail distribution. The non-response error due to the low response rate is reasoned to have minimal effect on the findings. Despite these limitations, this research has produced some interesting findings, which warrants further future research.

The self-reporting survey instrument (Appendix B) consists of three sections. Section A probed information on four demographic questions relating to the size age and turnover of the business and role of the respondent. Section B employed a 5-point Likert scale to investigate five constructs.
- preferred channel of obtaining business information (15 questions)
- managing business issues (5 questions)
- local business issues and needs (12 questions)
- perceptions of Parramatta City Council (3 questions)
- preferred contact methods (3 questions).

Section C asked respondents to identify three important issues that Parramatta City Council needs to improve. This section facilitated gaining additional information that was 'top-of-mind' to respondents.

Objective 4: Survey findings and analysis

Four type of analysis were undertaken:

(1) reliability of the constructs used in this study using the SCALE Cronbach Alpha with the test value set above 0.70[3]
(2) descriptive analysis of the respondents' demographic characteristics
(3) analysis of response data to identify statically significant constructs where mean scores value were 3.00 and above[4]
(4) non-parametric independent t-test and ANOVA test to examine if the responses given by different demographic groups were statistically significant.

(1) Reliability test

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[2] Tanner (1999)
[3] Othman et al. (2000)
[4] Kamhawi (2008)

The reliability analysis indicated a Cronbach alpha of 0.857, suggesting that the instruments were a reliable measure for determining the objectives of this study. Missing respondent data were omitted from analysis.

(2) Descriptive analysis of demographics

Table 1 (Appendix 1) summarises respondents' demographic characteristics. The result shows that most respondents are operating micro-sized business (n = 92) with more than 10 years of business experience (n = 105). Most of them have annual turnover of less than $1 million (n = 88). As for the role in business, the majority of them are owners (n = 95), while the rest of the respondents (n = 77) are employees.

The analysis of the size of the business by full-time employee numbers is graphically illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Size of business
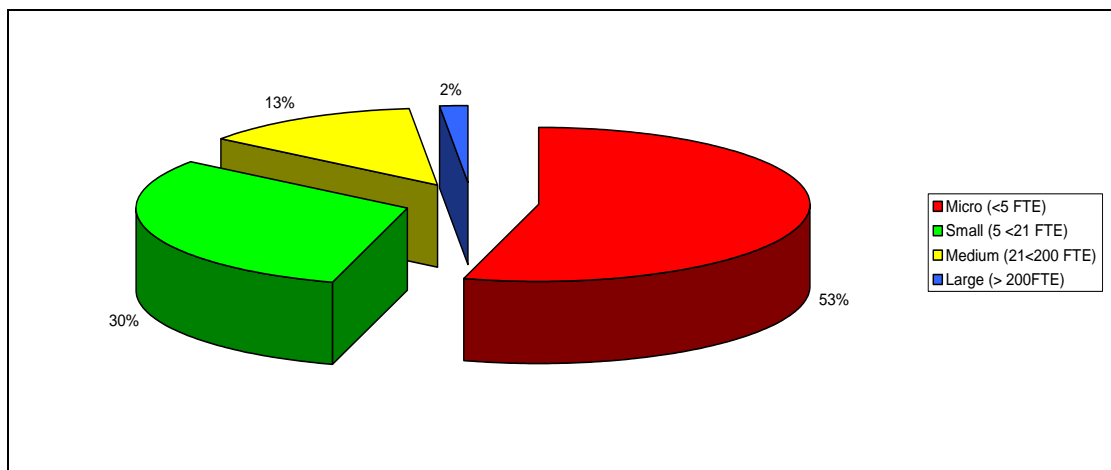
The analysis of the age of the business is graphically illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Age of business
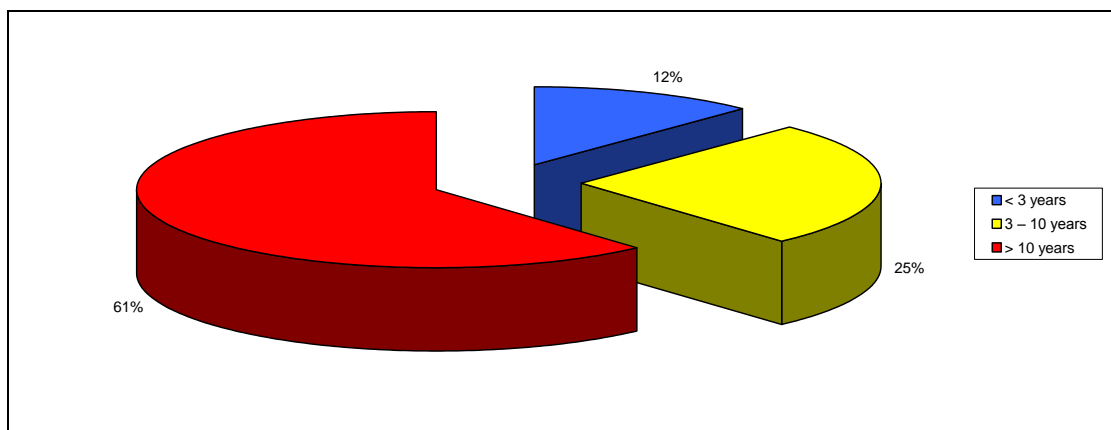
The analysis of the turnover of the business is graphically illustrated in Figure 3.

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Figure 3: Turnover per year (in $millions)
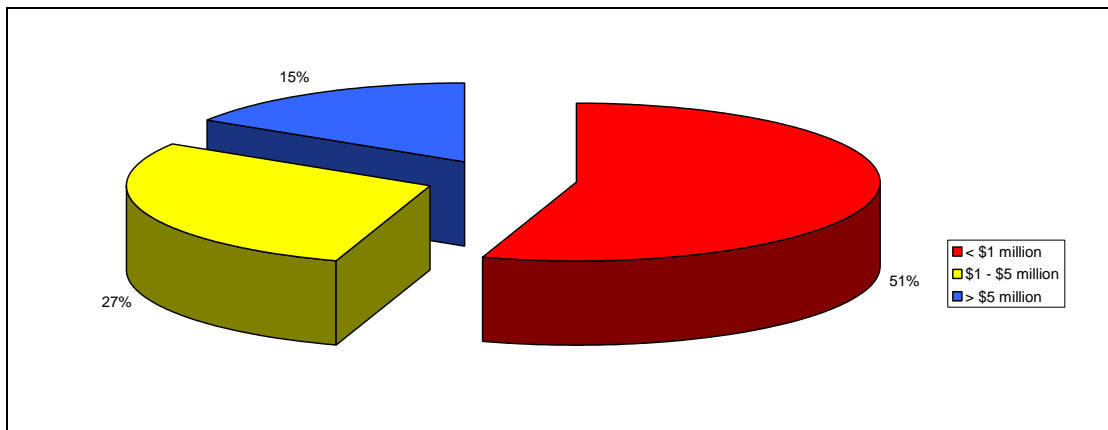
(3) Analysis of response data

Three types of analysis methods were employed to analyse the response data, First, an analysis of response data assessed the statistically significant channels to obtain business information, issues in managing business, local business issues, Parramatta City Council's information services, preferred contact methods, and preferred contact channels. Second, a thematic analysis was carried out on the open-ended responses for suggested improvements in Parramatta. Third, analysis of response data by demographic variables to identify groups that have defining characteristics.

Channels to obtain business information

An analysis of 15 channels to obtain business information revealed nine channels with a mean greater than 3.00 (Table 2 in Appendix 1). Further analysis using a one-sample test revealed that six channels are perceived to be important by the respondents, where $p < 0.01$ (see Figure 4). The top six channels, in order of importance[5], are:

- internet (M = 4.06, SD = 0.95)
- industry associations (M = 3.76, SD = 1.126)
- colleagues (M = 3.67, SD = 1.073)
- business and trade publications (M = 3.62, SD = 1.085)
- national newspapers (M = 3.41, SD = 1.232)
- accountants (M = 3.21, SD = 1.291).

Figure 4: Top six preferred channels to obtain business information

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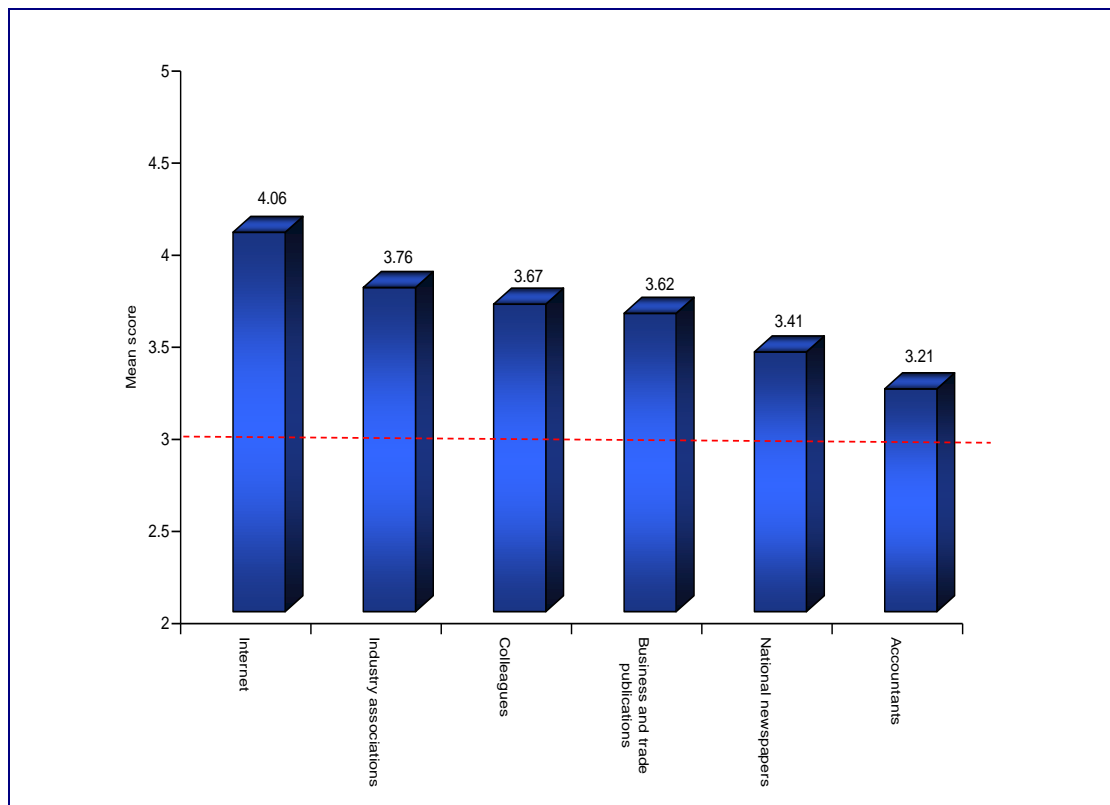
[5] M = mean score, SD = standard deviation

Issues in managing business

An analysis of the issues in managing business revealed all five constructs with mean scores above 3.00 (Figure 5). The one-sample t-test also showed these five constructs as important to respondents, where $p<0.01$ (Table 3). The five constructs for managing business, in order of importance, are:

- retaining suitable staff (M = 4.57, SD = 0.871)
- finding suitable staff (M = 4.48, SD = 0.936)
- complying with local government requirements (M = 3.50, SD = 1.15)
- local economic data (M = 3.35, SD = 1.141)
- Australian economic data (M = 3.35, SD = 1.192)

Figure 5: Issues in managing business
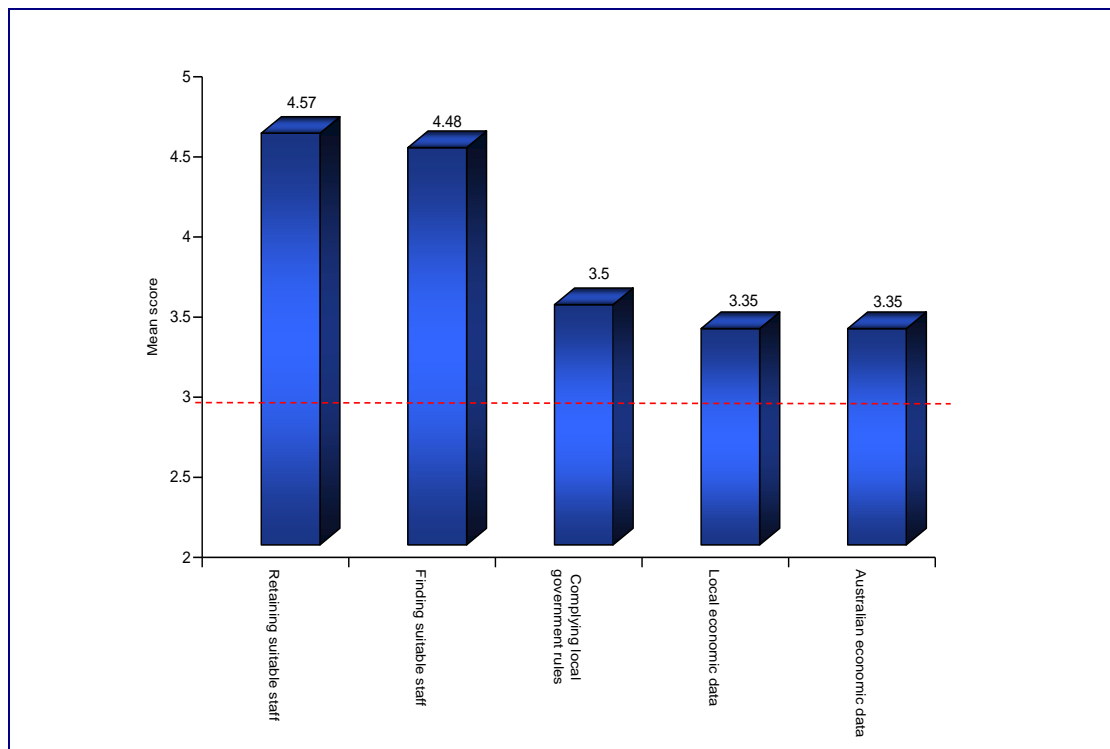
Local business issues

Five constructs identified as important by respondents had mean scores greater than 3.00 at p<0.01 (Figure 6 and Table 4). The five most important statements on local business issues are:

- "Parramatta is a good place to do business" (M = 4.08, SD = 0.846)
- "Interest in business sustainability program" (M = 3.48, SD = 1.065)
- "Public transport is suitable for my staffs' needs" (M = 3.42, SD = 1.192)
- "I am interested in CSR programs" (M = 3.25, SD = 1.10)
- "Public transport is suitable for my client's needs" (M = 3.24, SD = 1.203)

Figure 6: Local business issues

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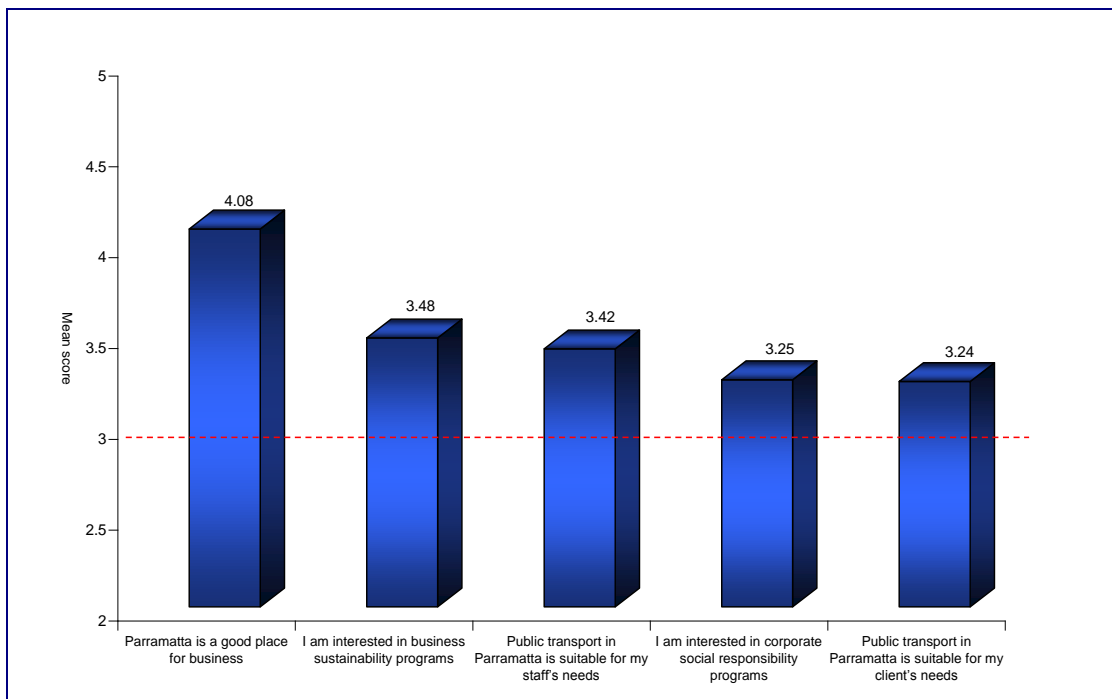
Parramatta City Council's communications

The analysis of the perceptions of Parramatta City Council's provision of information performance reveals mean scores of lower than 3.00 (though the values are very close) for all three questions (Figure 7 and Table 5):

- Type of information received from Council is appropriate (M = 2.90, SD = 0.98).
- Quality of information received from Council is appropriate (M = 2.90, SD = 0.99).
- Amount of information received from Council is adequate (M = 2.86, SD = 1.01).

Figure 7: Parramatta City Council's communication
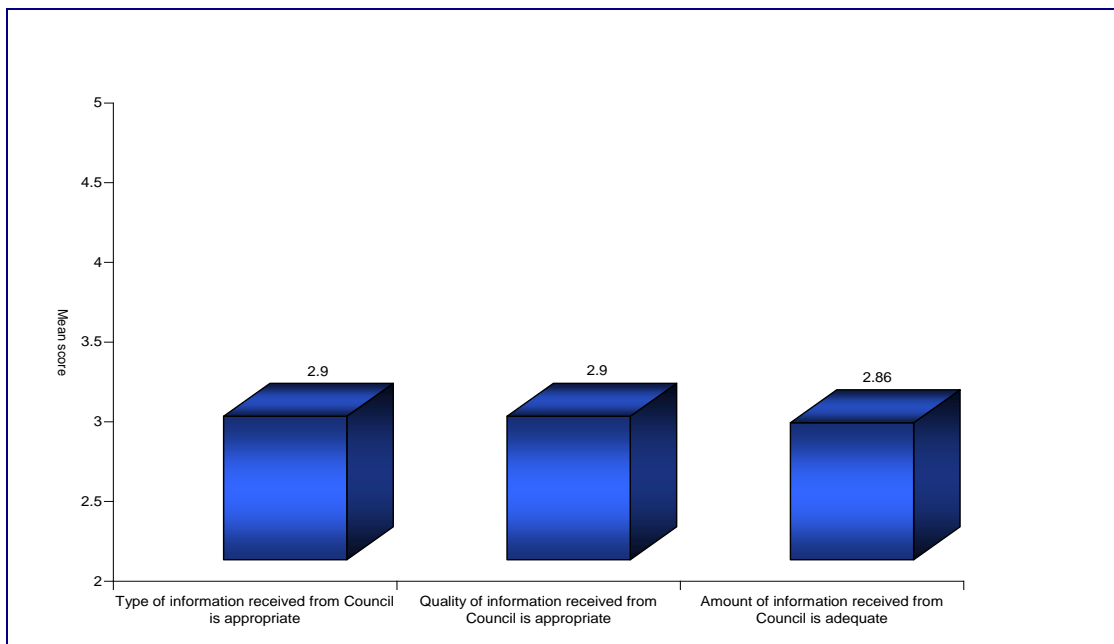
Preferred contact methods

Analysis of the preferred contact methods identified two channels as important, with mean scores above 3.0 (Figure 8 and Table 6):

- e-mail (M = 3.67, SD = 1.437)
- direct mail (M = 3.44, SD = 1.363).

Contact via telephone had a mean score of less than 3.00.

Figure 8: Preferred contact methods
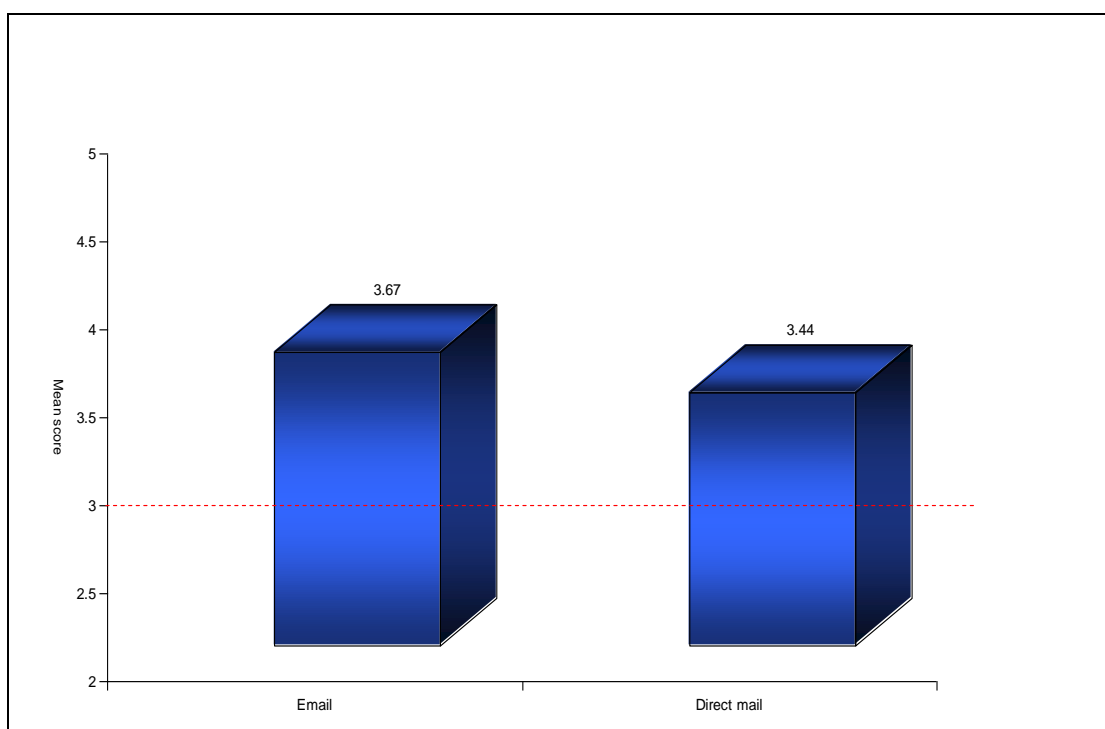
Suggested improvements in Parramatta

Respondents suggested 143 improvements for Parramatta. A thematic analysis of the responses revealed four main themes (Table 7):
- car parking (n=91)
- city conditions (n=28)
- public transportation (n=18)
- traffic flow (n=6).

Car parking

The majority of the respondents considered car parking in Parramatta City needs to be improved (n = 91). Car parking issues can be further classified into:

- *Provision of cheaper parking rate (n = 40)*

Most respondents suggested cheaper parking in Parramatta. Typical statements reflecting concerns are: *"We need better cheaper parking rates", "Please reduce the daily parking price" and "The parking fee should be cheaper"*.

- *Free parking in busy areas (n = 28)*

The second most identified suggestion is for free parking in busy areas. Typical statements reflecting this issue are: *"Please provide free short-term parking for visitors and clients", "Need to remove state parking levy", "Remove parking fees for parking after 6pm" and "We need more free parking as it's too expensive to park outside for our customers and staff"*.

- *Abolition of parking meter (n = 10)*

Respondents also suggested abolishing parking meters, with statements such as *"Please take off the parking meters", "We want more parking, with less meters" and "Abolish all parking meters in North Parramatta area"*.

- *Limited parking problem (n = 10)*

Several respondents identified the limited parking problem within Parramatta. Typical statements include: "*More parking spaces for regular users", "More parking for delivery vehicles" and "We have to park so far and walk as there are not enough parking spaces"*.

- *More parking for disabled people (n = 3)*

A small number of respondents suggested provision of more disabled-friendly parking spaces. Suggestion were *"We need more disabled parking", "Please provide disabled-friendly parking spaces, other people are using ours" and "Please prevent normal people from using disabled parking spaces"*.

Improve city conditions

Twenty-eight respondents suggested that city conditions need improvement. City conditions can be further classified into:

- *Tidiness (n = 12)*

Respondents identified the need for improved city cleanliness. Typical statements include: *"Get rid of vagrants in area - still too many", "Provide more rubbish bins on the footpaths" and "Too many drunk people littering"*.

- *Security (n = 12)*

Respondents identified the need for better security in the city. Typical statements include: "*We need greater police presence on the streets" and "Homeless people are a problem for our security*".

- *Street condition (n = 4)*

Respondent also identified the need to improve street condition. Typical statements include: "*The street condition needs to be improved immediately and "The southern Church Street needs improvement, the night street lighting is terrible*".

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Public transportation

Eighteen respondents suggested improving public transport. Public transport issues can be further classified into:

- *Quality of bus and trains services (n = 15)*
Common statements related to quality of bus and train services, such as: "*We need more shuttle bus to wider locations", "Ensure trains are punctual and clean", "Reliable train services" and "More buses towards George Street*".

- *Maintaining the ferry service (n = 3)*
Statement reflecting concerns for maintaining the ferry service include: "*Retain ferry service and improve it", "We need the ferry service" and "People can use the ferry service more frequently*".

Traffic flow conditions

Six respondents suggested traffic flow needs improvement. Public transport issues can be further classified into:

- *Traffic jam during peak hours (n = 4)*
Typical statements include: "*The traffic is terrible during lunch hour" and "Please improve traffic situation in George Street*".

- *Improving bottleneck road conditions (n = 2)*
Two respondents suggested on the need to improve bottleneck road conditions in Parramatta City with statements of *"Some of the roads are unbelievably narrow" and "We get stuck in some of the narrow roads, please do something*".

(4) Identification of differences between demographic groups

Differences between demographic groups were identified by using ANOVA to test for size, age and annual turnover of business. In addition, non-parametric independent analysis tested for the respondent's role in the business. The results are summarised in Table 8. Only variables with statistically significant associations are reported; these are:

- channels to obtain business information
- issues in managing business
- local business issues.

Preferred channel to obtain business information

The analysis suggests that respondents with *turnover of less than $1 million per year* have greater preference for obtaining business information from the internet (M = 4.25, SD = 0.87, $p<0.05$), industry associations (M = 3.94, SD = 1.04, $p<0.05$) and business and trade publications (M = 3.85, SD = 0.87, $p<0.05$).

Issues in managing business

The analysis suggests that employees (as opposed to owner-managers) are more likely to be concerned with their business's compliance with local government town requirements (M=3.86, SD=1.06, $p < 0.05$). Micro-sized firms are more concerned with finding suitable staff (M=4.26, SD =1.12, $p < 0.05$) and retaining suitable staff (M=4.43, SD=1.02, $p < 0.05$)**.**

The analysis suggests employees have more interest than owner-managers in corporate social responsibility programs (M=3.53, SD=1.09, $p < 0.05$). Businesses established for more than 10 years are more likely to be interested in corporate social responsibility programs (M = 3.34, SD = 1.11, $p < 0.05$) than their younger counterparts.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Parramatta CBD Business Census Research 2008 was completed to time, on budget and to specification utilising University of Western Sydney (UWS) academic staff and students. The close partnership between Parramatta City Council (PCC) and UWS leveraged organisational capabilities of both organisations to achieve a successful outcome.

The census of the Parramatta CBD identified 1,478 business premises with the exclusion of firms located within the Westfield and Parramatta train station shopping malls. The details of the businesses have been imported into the Parramatta City Council Business Database. The database provides an interface for ease of uploading information, searching, generating reports and modifying records. The data are protected by username and password authorisation. It is recommended that the database will need to be continually updated to maintain the currency and usefulness of data. Additionally, the expansion of the database contents to capture other firms within PCC's local government area (such as the Epping and Harris Park business centres) will add significant opportunities to understand and communicate with local businesses.

The results of the survey of business owners and managers reveal key information to assist PCC to understand and communicate with local business. The demographic characteristics indicate businesses generally align to national trends as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics[6] in terms of size in full-time employee numbers, age in years and annual turnover.

Businesses report five preferred channels for obtaining their information, with the internet being most preferred by the respondents, and with micro-sized business showing a distinct preference for the internet, industry associations and business and trade publications. Despite respondents reporting PCC was the least preferred channel for obtaining business information, the relatively low ranking of PCC as an information resource may be symptomatic of the respondents' perceived divide between local government utility and industry practice. It is suggested that enhancing the content of the PCC's website with relevant information may facilitate 'closeness' of Council to their local business community. This supports the notion that PCC should continue with and upgrade the resources allocated to website development as an efficient and effective platform available to local businesses.

However, website developments need to be supported by an integrated promotional campaign to drive traffic to the site. Opportunities exist for developing close industry association alliances and partnerships that can be leveraged to drive traffic and assist in the delivery of business information to their members. Further, PCC may wish to partner with appropriate small business development portals such as SMExcellence.com.au to fully exploit the networked capabilities of the internet. As PCC enhances their reputation within the business community by delivering targeted information, it is envisaged that word-of-mouth and referrals will generate significant positive results in enhancing PCC's reputation.

Respondents clearly identify that finding and retaining staff are key issues in managing their businesses, especially important for micro-businesses. Projects such as mynewworkcity.com.au provide valuable assistance in employment services for local businesses and growing social capital in the community. In addition, local and national economic data have been identified as important to the respondents, with the initiatives such as BizFacts and the Business Section on the PCC website aligning to community needs. It is recommended that PCC continue to monitor the adoption and perceived usefulness of these initiatives with a view to tailoring the information and delivery channels to fulfil the expectations of local firms.

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[6] 8127.0 – Characteristics of Small Business, Australia and 8167.0 – Selected Characteristics of Australian Business 2005-06

In the analysis of local business issues and needs, business sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) was highly ranked, with employees and older businesses more likely to be interested in CSR. Thus it is suggested that as the more mature and larger businesses have an interest in these two issues, targeted promotional campaigns can be directed at these market segments as they have latent demand. Conversely, owner-managers of newer businesses may not recognise the immediate benefits of business sustainability programs or CSR, thus the opportunity exists to help disseminate appropriate information based upon the premise of 'What's-in-it-for-me?' appeal. In either case, there are opportunities to promote local businesses who are exemplars to assist community understanding the benefits adoption of sustainability and CSR issues.

Interestingly, respondents reported public transport was suitable for their client and staff needs despite the open-ended responses identifying public transport as an issue. Upon inspection of the qualitative responses, the respondents refer to the quality of bus and train services, many of which are beyond the immediate management by PCC. Surprisingly, maintaining the ferry received only three citations despite the publicity campaign in the media. The relatively low awareness of the proposed shuttle route and its suitability also presents marketing opportunities to improve the awareness with the business community.

The type, quality and amount of information given through PCC's communications were not statistically significant. However, all scores were positively skewed and thus are indicative of the effectiveness of PCC's communication to the business community. As most businesses reported email as the preferred communication channel, the use of the Business Database to store and manage contact details will be invaluable in assisting targeting individual sections of the business community with relevant information. Combining email and direct mail campaigns is a recommended option to ensure the individual preferences of business owner-manager are fulfilled.

In terms of improvements, 'parking' was identified as the dominant issue, with 'cheaper' and 'free parking' accounting for nearly 55% of responses. From the comments it is unclear if the responses represent parking concerns for the respondent, their staff, clients or all of these. Further research is warranted to better understand the parking issues.

Relatively few respondents (20%) reported that city conditions need improving; their reasons were varied and thus it is difficult to ascertain an underlying theme. Fewer than 5% were concerned about traffic flow within the city, a positive sign in light of the busy nature of the city CBD.

References

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Disclaimer

Appendix 1
Tables

Table 1: Demographic analysis

Demographic characteristics		n	%	Median
Size of business by number of equivalent full-time employees (FTE) following ABS classification	Micro (<5 FTE)	92	53.2	5 FTE
	Small (5–20 FTE)	52	30.1	
	Medium (21–200 FTE)	22	12.7	
	Large (>200 FTE)	3	1.7	
Age of business The number of the years the business is in operation	<3 years	21	12.1	15 years
	3–10 years	44	25.4	
	>10 years	105	60.7	
Turnover Business turnover per year in million of AUS$	<$1 million	88	50.9	$1 million
	$1–$5 million	46	26.6	
	>$5 million	26	15.0	
Role in business	Owner of business	95	54.9	*not applicable*
	Employee of business	77	44.5	

Table 2: Channels to obtain business information

Preferred channel to obtain business information	Mean	SD	P<0.01	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	*Upper*
Internet	4.06	0.952	0.000 *	0.91	1.21
Industry associations	3.76	1.126	0.000*	0.59	0.93
Colleagues	3.67	1.073	0.000*	0.51	0.83
Business and trade publications	3.62	1.085	0.000*	0.46	0.79
National newspapers	3.41	1.232	0.000*	0.22	0.60
Accountants	3.21	1.291	0.033*	0.02	0.41
Government publications	3.17	3.604	0.537	-0.38	0.72
Government department	3.07	1.257	0.499	-0.13	0.26
Business events	3.06	1.231	0.530	-0.13	0.25
Short courses	2.99	1.236	0.900	-0.20	0.18
Local newspapers	2.86	1.191	0.141	-0.32	0.05
Radio	2.72	1.260	0.004	-0.47	-0.09
Financial plan	2.69	1.293	0.003	-0.50	-0.11
Television	2.41	1.241	0.000	-0.78	-0.40
Parramatta City Council	2.32	1.151	0.000	-0.86	-0.51

* Significant at 0.05 level

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Table 3: Issues in managing business

Managing business	Mean	SD	P<0.01	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Retaining suitable staff	4.57	0.871	0.000*	1.44	1.71
Finding suitable staff	4.48	0.935	0.000*	1.34	1.62
Complying local government rules	3.50	1.150	0.000*	0.33	0.68
Local economic data	3.35	1.141	0.000*	0.18	0.53
Australian economic data	3.35	1.192	0.000*	0.17	0.53

* Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4: Local business issues

Business issues and needs	Mean	SD	P<0.01	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Parramatta is a good place for business	4.08	0.846	0.000*	0.95	1.21
I am interested in business sustainability programs	3.48	1.065	0.000*	0.31	0.64
Public transport in Parramatta is suitable for my staff's needs	3.42	1.192	0.000*	0.23	0.60
I am interested in corporate social responsibility programs	3.25	1.100	0.005*	0.08	0.42
Public transport in Parramatta is suitable for my client's needs	3.24	1.203	0.011*	0.06	0.42
A commuter ferry would be of benefit to my business	3.08	1.307	0.411	-0.12	0.28
The proposed bus shuttle route in Parramatta is suitable	2.94	1.030	0.488	-0.22	0.10
Our firm is involved in business sustainability programs	2.66	1.152	0.000	-0.52	-0.16
I am aware of the proposed bus shuttle route in Parramatta	2.57	1.337	0.000	-0.64	-0.23
Parking in Parramatta is suitable for my client's needs	2.28	1.401	0.000	-0.93	-0.51
Parking in Parramatta is suitable for my staff's needs	2.05	1.337	0.000	-1.15	-0.74

* Significant at 0.05 level

Table 5: Parramatta City Council's communications

Perception on Parramatta City Council	Mean	SD	P<0.01	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Type of information received from Council is appropriate	2.90	0.98	NA#	NA	NA
Quality of information received from Council is appropriate	2.90	0.99	NA	NA	NA
Amount of information received from Council is adequate	2.86	1.01	NA	NA	NA

 # One sample t-test was not completed as mean scores are lower than 3.00 value.

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Table 6: Preferred contact methods

Preferred contact methods	Mean	SD	P<0.01	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	*Upper*
Email	3.67	1.437	0.000*	0.44	0.90
Direct mail	3.44	1.363	0.000*	0.22	0.66
Telephone	2.23	1.262	0.000	-0.98	-0.57

* Significant at 0.05 level

Table 7: Suggestions for improvement to Parramatta City Council

Parking issues	N	City condition	N	Public transportation	N	Traffic flow condition	N
Cheaper parking rate	40	Cleanliness	12	Quality of bus and train services	15	Traffic jam	4
Free parking	28	Security	12	Maintain ferry service	3	Bottleneck roads	2
Abolish parking meter	10	Street condition	4				
Limited parking space	10						
Parking for disabled	3						
Total suggestions	**91**	**Total suggestions**	**28**	**Total suggestions**	**18**	**Total suggestions**	**6**

Table 8: Identification of differences between demographic groups

PREFERRED CHANNELS	Categorization	N	Mean	SD	P-value	Significant finding?	Which group?
Size of business #							
Internet	Micro (<5 FTE)	89	4.10	1.04	0.035*	**Yes**	Inconclusive
	Small (5 <21 FTE)	51	4.24	0.65			
	Medium (21<200 FTE)	21	3.71	0.84			
	Large (> 200FTE)	3	3.00	1.73			
Turnover per year #							
Business and trade publications	< $1 million	87	3.85	0.87	0.020	**Yes**	< $1 million
	$1 - $5 million	44	3.14	1.19			
	> $5 million	26	3.54	1.36			
Industry associations	< $1 million	86	3.94	1.04	0.029	**Yes**	< $1 million
	$1 - $5 million	44	3.39	1.20			
	> $5 million	25	3.80	1.19			
Internet	< $1 million	85	4.25	0.87	0.031	**Yes**	< $1 million
	$1 - $5 million	43	3.79	0.86			
	> $5 million	26	4.04	1.14			
MANAGING BUSINESS	Categorization	N	Mean	SD	P-value	Significant finding?	Which group?
Role ##							
Comply government requirements	Owners	92	3.22	1.14	0.000	**Yes**	Employees
	Employees	76	3.86	1.06			
Size of business #							
Finding staff	Micro (<5 FTE)	87	4.26	1.12	0.003	**Yes**	Micro size business
	Small (5 <21 FTE)	52	4.81	0.39			
	Medium (21<200 FTE)	22	4.73	0.45			
	Large (> 200FTE)	3	4.33	0.57			
Retaining staff	Micro (<5 FTE)	88	4.43	1.02	0.043	**Yes**	Micro size business
	Small (5 <21 FTE)	52	4.79	0.45			
	Medium (21<200 FTE)	22	4.82	0.39			
	Large (> 200FTE)	3	4.33	1.15			
LOCAL BUSINESS ISSUES AND NEEDS	Categorization	N	Mean	SD	P-value	Significant finding?	Which group?
Role ##							
Interest in Corporate social responsibility	Owners	89	3.02	1.05	0.002	**Yes**	Employees
	Employees	73	3.53	1.09			
Age of business #							
Interest in Corporate social responsibility	< 3 years	20	3.05	1.27	0.001	**Yes**	> 10 years
	3 – 10 years	42	3.07	0.97			
	> 10 years	99	3.34	1.11			

* Significant at 0.05 level
\# ANOVA test – Dunnett T3 approach
\#\# Non-parametric independent t-test – Mann Whitney test

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Appendix 2
Field records

Parent Key:………………..

Date:………………….Group:…………………Initials:……………………..

Trading Name	☐ **Government agency**
Company Name	

ABN ☐	*ACN* ☐	*BN* ☐	

Physical street address	*Unit number:………..……Street Number:…………..……* *Street:……………………………………………………* *Level:……………………………………………………...*
Building name	*If appropriate*
Managing agent	*If appropriate*
Postal address 1	*If different from street address* *Postcode:…………..*
Postal address 2	*If required* *Postcode:…………..*
Phone	
Fax	
Email	
Contact name	
Position	
Notes *Please record any follow up required.*	

☐ **Survey package delivered**

☐ **Follow up required by UWS**

☐ **Vacant business premises**

☐ **Business moved to new premises**

New address) ……………………………..…………………

…………………………………………………………………

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Appendix 3
Survey Instrument

To the business owner or manager,

Please take time to participate in this survey, even if only in part. EVERY response will help us to help business people like you. Your time and input is certainly appreciated, thank you.

1. How would you describe your role?
   - ☐ Owner/operator, *working in and owning the business*
   - ☐ Owner, *not working in the business daily*
   - ☐ General manager or manager
   - ☐ Financial controller or accountant
   - ☐ Other, please specify…………………………………………………………..

2. How many years old is your business?_____

3. How long have you been in your current location? _____

4. What is the approximate floor space of your premises in square metres?_____

5. Can you estimate how many staff work in your business as full-time equivalents?_____

6. Can you indicate the range of your turnover from the following categories?

   ☐ Under $1m per annum   ☐ Between $5m and $10m per annum

   ☐ Between $1m and $2m per annum   ☐ Between $10m and $20m per annum

   ☐ Between $2m and $5m per annum   ☐ Above $20m per annum

7. Your ABN is _____ Note: ABNs are used for statistical purposes in identifying your

industry category

8. How many company cars does your business have? _____

9. How many dedicated car spaces does your business have? _____

10. How often would you deal with Parramatta City Council per year? _____

Thinking about the sources of your <u>business information</u>, please circle the number that best reflects your opinions on the following statements. *(Please note: 1 is "strongly disagree" through to 5, which is "strongly agree")*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I get my information from **TV**………..	1	2	3	4	5
12. I get my information from **radio**………..	1	2	3	4	5
13. I get my information from **national newspapers**.................................	1	2	3	4	5
14. I get my information from **local newspapers**……………………...........	1	2	3	4	5
15. I get my information from **business and trade publications**…………..	1	2	3	4	5
16. I get my information from **industry associations**…………………….....	1	2	3	4	5
17. I get my information directly from **government departments**……….....	1	2	3	4	5
18. I get my information directly from **Parramatta City Council**…….........	1	2	3	4	5
19. I get my information from **government publications**……………….…....	1	2	3	4	5
20. I get my information from my **accountant**…..	1	2	3	4	5
21. I get my information from my **financial planner**.................................	1	2	3	4	5
22. I get my information from **short courses**……………….……………......	1	2	3	4	5
23. I get my information from **business events such as briefings**……….	1	2	3	4	5
24. I get my information from my **colleagues**…………………………..........	1	2	3	4	5
25. I get my information from **the internet** ………........…………………......	1	2	3	4	5

Thinking about managing your business, how do you rate the following issues where 1 is 'least important' and 5 is 'most important'?

	Least Important				Most Important
26. **Finding suitable staff**………………………………………………	1	2	3	4	5
27. **Retaining suitable staff**………………………………………	1	2	3	4	5
28. Complying with **local government town requirements**……………..	1	2	3	4	5
29. **Australian economic data** such as employment rates, inflation, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
30. **Local economic data** such as land prices, leasing rates, etc………..	1	2	3	4	5

Thinking about how local business issues and your needs; please circle the number that best reflects your opinions on the following statements. *(Please note: 1 is "strongly disagree" through to 5, which is "strongly agree")*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
31. **Public transport** in Parramatta is suitable **for my client's needs**….	1	2	3	4	5
32. **Public transport** in Parramatta is **suitable for my staff's needs**…..	1	2	3	4	5
33. **Parking** in Parramatta is **suitable for my client's needs**………….	1	2	3	4	5
34. **Parking** in Parramatta is **suitable for my staff's needs**…………….	1	2	3	4	5
35. I am **aware** of the **proposed shuttle bus route** in Parramatta……..	1	2	3	4	5
36. The **proposed shuttle bus route** in Parramatta is **suitable**…………	1	2	3	4	5
37. A **commuter ferry service** would be of **benefit** to my business…….	1	2	3	4	5
38. **Parramatta** is a good place to do business……………………………	1	2	3	4	5
38. I am **interested** in **business sustainability programs**……………...	1	2	3	4	5
39. Our firm is **involved** in **business sustainability programs**…..…….	1	2	3	4	5
40. Our firm is **involved** in **corporate social responsibility** programs...	1	2	3	4	5
41. I am **interested** in **corporate social responsibility** programs……..	1	2	3	4	5
42. The **type of information** I receive **from Council is appropriate**….	1	2	3	4	5
43. The **quality of information** I receive **from Council is appropriate**..	1	2	3	4	5
44. The **amount of information** I receive **from Council is adequate**….	1	2	3	4	5
45. I prefer to be contacted via **email**…………………………………	1	2	3	4	5
46. I prefer to be contacted via **direct mail**…………………………..	1	2	3	4	5
47. I prefer to be contacted via **phone** …………………………....…	1	2	3	4	5

48. What are the top **3 improvements** that you would like to see in Parramatta?

1. …………………………………………………………………………………………

2. …………………………………………………………………………………………

3. …………………………………………………………………………………………

49. Do you have any advice or recommendations for Parramatta City Council to improve economic development in the City?   *Please feel free to attach additional pages of feedback for the council as required.*

……..

……..

……..

Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

Appendix 4
Invitation letter for participation in survey

March 2008
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith South DC NSW 1797

To the business manager or owner

Parramatta CBD Business Census 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

We invite you to participate in an important research initiative by Parramatta City Council in partnership with the University of Western Sydney. The results of this survey will provide a detailed profile of industry in the Parramatta CBD; identify strengths and weaknesses within the business sector; assist with the future planning for the CBD and facilitate improved communication with business.

All individuals' data gathered in the course of study will remain completely confidential. No individual contributor's details will be identified in any analysis or publication of the results. Only the research team will have access to the surveys. At any point in the research process, you are, of course, free to withdraw your support for the research without having to give a reason and without consequence.

If you decide to complete the survey, it will take approximately 8-10 minutes. I have included a self-addressed envelop for ease in the return of the survey. Additionally, a copy of the findings will be available when the research is complete, see attached form.

If you have any queries please contact either Geoffrey Lee, Associate Dean Engagement from the University of Western Sydney on 9852 4252 or Michelle Macgregor Owen, Business Development Manager, Parramatta City Council on 9806 5785.

Thanking you in advance.

Councillor Paul Barber   Dr Geoffrey Lee
Lord Mayor   **Associate Dean Engagement**
Parramatta City Council   University Of Western Sydney

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee or the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Panel. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, nominated as Complaint Officer k.buckley@uws.edu.au (tel: 02 47 360 883). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome."

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Appendix 5
Request for further information

Request for further information

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

If you would like further news and information on specific issues, please check the appropriate box. You will only be contacted on the areas (if any) that if you have indicated.

I am interested in…

☐   **… University of Western Sydney events and publications.**

☐   **… Parramatta City Council events and publications eg.Biz Facts.**

☐   **… business sustainability programs.**

☐   **… corporate social responsibility programs.**

☐   **… the ferry debate and campaign.**

☐   **… staff recruitment and training.**

☐   **… business events and networking opportunities.**

☐   **… a copy of the research findings.**

☐   **… an invitation to participate in future research .**

☐   **… all of the above.**

If 'yes' to any of the above items, please fill in your contact details:

Name: ………………………………………………………………………….

Title: …………………………………………………………………………..

Business name: ……………………………………………………………….

Postal address: ………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………..

Contact phone number: …………………………………………………………

Email: …………………………………………………………………………..

Please note: This sheet will be kept separate from your questionnaire at our offices.