

**Media release**

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### **Co-working and maker space one step closer**

Blue Mountains City Councillors got a first-hand look at successful co-working and maker spaces throughout Sydney by taking part in a roadshow organised by Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise (BMEE). The tour was designed to inform Councillors on the different models of co-working and to demonstrate how these facilities operate and the social and economic benefits they generate.

Ward One Councillors Kerry Brown and Don McGregor, Ward Two Councillor Chris Van der Kley and Ward Four Councillor Darryl Bowling joined the BMEE team late last year to visit Oran Park Smart Work Hub, Maker Space & Co in Marrickville and Hub Sydney in Darlinghurst. Fantastic Aussie Tours generously donated a bus and driver for the day.

“This roadshow was designed to give Councillors the opportunity to see these spaces for themselves and ask questions about how they operate,” said BMEE CEO Jacqueline Brinkman. “Research shows that co-working and maker spaces catalyse social and economic activity, particularly in regional areas.”

“We know that the rate of home-based businesses in the Blue Mountains has grown by 10% in the past decade; while 59% of the resident workforce leaves the Blue Mountains for work every day. A co-working and makers space in the region would be transformational for the local economy, helping businesses to grow and collaborate while also capturing the lost economic opportunities that occur when people commute out of the region every day and spend their money elsewhere,” said Ms Brinkman.

Cr Kerry Brown said “the roadshow gave us an opportunity to see these collaborative spaces and to hear case studies of small business owners who have been able to take on bigger contracts, employ staff and scale up their businesses thanks to the collaborations and the physical space that co-working and maker spaces affords them. I look forward to working with BMEE to see how we may be able to facilitate such a space here in the Blue Mountains.”

Cr Chris Van der Kley said “BMEE has done a tremendous amount of research and community engagement to demonstrate how a co-working and maker space could benefit the Blue Mountains community and economy, and the roadshow gave us a chance to see this in action. I am confident that such a facility would be of significant benefit to the Blue Mountains, and I hope that Council and BMEE can continue to work together to facilitate this vision.”

Council is currently undertaking a review of Civic Place in Katoomba Street that may include examining the feasibility of the site for a co-working and maker space. BMEE is also reviewing numerous other potential sites and options as part of this ongoing process.

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