

Case Study: Wollombi, NSW

www.wollombi.nsw.au

Type of Location: Less than two hours from Sydney, Wollombi is rich in history, with aboriginal rock engravings, the convict-built Great North Road and historic buildings of the Wollombi village. Wollombi valley is a unique part of the Hunter Valley Wine Country; the Wollombi Valley's vineyards have been producing fine wines in this region since the 1850s.



Population: In the 2006 Census, there were 264 persons usually residing in Wollombi (NSW).

Employment: In the 2006 Census, the most common responses for occupation for employed persons usually resident in Wollombi (Suburb) were Professionals 23.0%, Managers 22.1% and Laborers 19%.

Applicant Organisation: Greater Wollombi Communities Alliance Inc.

Synopsis: Being a web developer, Peter Firminger knew about the Community Geographic Domain Name initiative early on and was later on the .au Domains Administrator Names Policy Panel. The website was initially developed with the aim to give smaller associations and groups a web presence.

The Website was launched in October 2007 and features visitor information, business directory, Car pool initiative, Job seekers information and much information on pertinent local issues such as the Sydney Gas problem the town is currently facing.

What they Say: "Our site has certainly had a huge effect on the communication of local issues. I'm often stopped by people locally wanting to discuss a story I wrote or linked to, or to thank me for posting an event or local survey for wider readership by the community.

"We get good traffic at the "Visitors" page but as that page says, the website really isn't for them and we channel them off to more appropriate websites. A few local accommodation houses have told me that they point their guests to our events list to see what's happening during their stay here.

"The main benefit is in local communication through or members mailing list, a one-way announce list that has very low traffic so it doesn't annoy anyone. We only post to it when there is an urgent issue."

Advice for other communities:

"Decide early on what you want to achieve and do some research on other sites to get examples. If you can work out how to achieve something with local talent, contact the people that have already achieved it and ask them.

"Don't try and own it. It's the community's website not yours. Don't charge for listings and membership, you'll limit the people using it that way. Yes, make them join for free so that they can log in and access the forms hidden from Spambots etc. Use a cookie to keep them logged in so that they don't have to go through the process each time. Then you can also pre-populate much form information.

"Don't get bogged down with design issues and hold things up because someone doesn't like that colour or that photo in the header or whatever... Content is King. Write verbosely and write often. That's what makes a community website work." Peter Firminger, Greater Wollombi Communities Alliance Inc.