

# **Hawkesbury Harvest Business Plan**

**May 2004**

## **Section 1**

### **Hawkesbury Harvest History and Evolution**

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## Table of Abbreviations

BHSC	Baulkham Hills Shire Council
DOTARS	Department of Transport and Regional Services
DSRD	Department of State and Regional Development
DUAP	Department of Urban Affairs and Planning
FGT	Farm Gate Trail
GWSEDB	Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board
HCC	Hawkesbury City Council
HAWKESBURY HARVEST	Hawkesbury Harvest
HSC	Hornsby Shire Council
RAP	Regional Assistance Programme
UWS	University of Western Sydney

## An Invitation

This business plan is a living document. We have placed it on our web site for all to see. If you live in Sydney or are a visitor to this wonderful city you are a stakeholder in Hawkesbury Harvest by the very fact that you eat. Hawkesbury Harvest is the local ingredient of Sydney's dynamic and evolving food culture.

Hawkesbury Harvest has been created to improve the quality of life of as many people as possible who have association with the produce and products resulting from the agricultural industries, associated agribusiness and other complementary businesses located within the Sydney region.

The farm gate value of agriculture production in this region is estimated at more than \$1 billion per annum<sup>1</sup>. This represents at least 12% of NSW's total agricultural production grown on approximately 1% of the state's agricultural land. The value of vegetables produced in Sydney as they pass through the farm gate on their way to market is estimated at \$250 million per annum. Of all the fresh leafy vegetables consumed in Sydney up to 90% are grown in Sydney. Market gardens exist as far east as Botany near Sydney's International Airport and as far west as the Richmond Lowlands at the base of the Blue Mountains. Over 11,000 people are employed full time on Sydney farms. The North-West sector accounts for more than 50% of this economic activity.

We encourage you to become involved in how Hawkesbury Harvest operates. We are creating something that has an every increasing appeal to more and more people at local, regional, national and international levels.

We invite and welcome your suggestions of how you think Sydney's local agriculture can be improved through the Hawkesbury Harvest process. To find out more please read on. We believe we have an interesting story to tell.

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<sup>1</sup> Gillespie, P.D., and Mason, D., 2002, *The Value of Agriculture in the Sydney Region (Draft)*, NSW Agriculture, Sydney.

## Section 1: Hawkesbury Harvest History and Evolution

### *What is Hawkesbury Harvest?*

Hawkesbury Harvest is a 'grass roots' community organisation that is setting Sydney apart from other cities of Australia and the world. It is demonstrating to the world the benefits local agriculture contributes to the quality of all life within the environs associated with metropolitan areas.

Hawkesbury Harvest is an organisation that facilitates the economic and social wellbeing of its members in an environmentally responsible manner. It does not aim to maximise profit for the organisation itself. Rather it aims to implement mechanisms that will generate funds and income to at least meet the operational and development costs required to maximise the public good and private good outcomes of its activities for the benefit of as many people as possible. This ethic will be a major factor in determining:

- How the organisation is legally set up
- The processes and structures by which it conducts its business
- How those people, groups and organisations with which it establishes relationships will need to think and act.

The geographic context for Hawkesbury Harvest is that part of the Hawkesbury River Catchment included in the North-West sector of the Sydney basin and it encompasses a great deal of what is considered as the Sydney region. For the purposes of this document local agriculture also means regional agriculture<sup>2</sup> and will apply specifically to this area, which will be referred to in this document as the Hawkesbury region.

The economic, social and environmental benefits that agriculture in the Hawkesbury region contributes amount to more than 50% of the following:

#### Economic

- The value of produce grown in the Sydney region as it leaves the farm is at least \$1 billion per annum. This represents a minimum of 12% of NSW's total agricultural production grown on approximately 1% of the State's agricultural land. The flow-on economic activity from this local agriculture is worth at least \$4 billion per annum.
- The on-farm employment is at least 11,500 full time jobs of which 7,500 are occupied by people whose heritage originates in countries where English is not the first language. Hawkesbury Harvest is bringing increased economic viability to more and more of Sydney's small farms with associated employment growth.

#### Social

- Sydney has a vibrant and developing social culture to which food and wine make a significant contribution. Hawkesbury Harvest is increasingly being seen as representing the 'local' ingredient of that food and wine culture.
- Local agriculture contributes to the security of food supply for Sydney residents. At the end of 2003 the only source of lettuce and a number of other leafy

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<sup>2</sup> The management of biophysical resources for food, fibre and ornamental outputs and the distribution and utilization of these outputs for economic and social benefits (Source: Strategic Plan for Sustainable Agriculture – Sydney Region, NSW Agriculture, 1998)

vegetables in Sydney was that which was grown in the Hawkesbury local government area (LGA). Crops west of the Great Divide had failed due to lack of water due to the drought and those in Queensland had failed due to extreme heat. Global warming may very likely increase such incidents in the future. Of all the fresh leafy vegetable consumed in the Sydney metropolitan area up to 90% are grown in the Hawkesbury region.

Hawkesbury Harvest facilitates the on-going role of the region as Sydney's traditional food bowl. The organisation works with small farming families with the aim of maintaining the rural amenity of the region which is fundamental to the viability of the tourism and recreational industries.

## Environmental

- Local agriculture and rural landscape go hand in hand. Sustainable agriculture is a vital component of the 'lungs of Sydney', contributing to biodiversity and providing green space, which provides opportunities for activities that enhance human wellbeing. It is also central to the quality of water and soil health, both of which are strategic resources for future generations of Sydney residents.

## Organisational History

### ***How Hawkesbury Harvest came about***

Hawkesbury Harvest was created when three streams of thought and action intersected.

#### Stream 1

- In 1992 more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil adopted Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.
- In 1996 the Hawkesbury City Council, University of Western Sydney – Hawkesbury Campus and Hawkesbury District Health Service adopted the WHO Healthy Cities Project that aims to place health high on the agenda of decision-makers to promote comprehensive local strategies for health and sustainable development based on the Agenda 21 principles and objectives.
- In 1997 the Hawkesbury Food Program was established as a sub-committee of the Hawkesbury Healthy Cities Project. The Hawkesbury Food Program is a community based project that aims to improve the health and well being of the people of the Hawkesbury LGA by improving access to and consumption of safe, nutritious and affordable food and by strengthening local sustainable agriculture. It is a joint venture between a number of community groups such as Hawkesbury Care and authorities including Hawkesbury District Health Service, Hawkesbury City Council, NSW Agriculture and University of Western Sydney – Hawkesbury Campus.

## Stream 2

In 1992 NSW Agriculture responded to the growing community demand for the different land uses in the Sydney region to ensure that the human activity associated with those land uses would have minimal impact upon the environment. Thus began an extensive community consultation process that resulted in the release of the 'Strategic Plan for Sustainable Agriculture – Sydney Region' by the Minister for Agriculture in May 1998 ([www.agric.nsw.gov.au/reader/advice-luse/syd-sp.pdf](http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/reader/advice-luse/syd-sp.pdf)). Sustainability of agriculture is centred on the principles of security of tenure, security of resource, equity and appropriate incentives.

## Stream 3

This stream provided the catalyst for the creation of the community based Hawkesbury Harvest organisation. In the 1990's there was an increasing recognition by the community of what the rural lands of the Hawkesbury LGA contributed to quality of life not just in the Hawkesbury but also to the Sydney region generally. This is born out in studies undertaken by Hawkesbury City Council such as 'Our City Our Future'. At the same time people were also recognising the opportunities that agriculture, tourism and the environment in the Hawkesbury offered. What happened next provides a good example of community and government working together for the common good.

The sequence of events is as follows:

At the end of March 2000 a meeting of 12 people representing economic, social and environmental interests was convened by Hawkesbury Cuisine, a sub-committee of the Hawkesbury Food Program to consider ways to advance the role of sustainable agriculture in the Hawkesbury. This is the first of two critical community based meetings that lead to the formation of Hawkesbury Harvest. In this meeting it was decided that the potential for agriculture to remain as a viable form of land use in the Hawkesbury would be enhanced by developing linkages with other appropriate economic, social and environmental capital in the local area through the Farm Gate Trail concept. The name of Hawkesbury Harvest was suggested. At this point it was only an idea.

The idea was promoted through the Hawkesbury Gazette (the local paper) and by targeting specific individuals and groups. A public meeting was held in a local orange farmer's packing shed on 11 May 2000. More than 30 people attended. At that meeting the community took ownership for the idea of Hawkesbury Harvest and the three streams were grounded well and truly in the community. Hawkesbury Harvest was born with its focus essentially on the economic viability of metropolitan agriculture and associated small businesses. This included businesses that were complementary to agriculture and which provided mutual leverage.

## ***Major Achievements and Milestones***

- September 2000 – Incorporation of Hawkesbury Harvest
- October 2000 - publication of the interim Hawkesbury Harvest Farm Gate Trail map with 13 destinations
- 12 April 2001 – launch of the Autumn/Winter Farm Gate Trail Map with 20 destinations. This map reflected the regional philosophy of Hawkesbury Harvest by including sites across the local government areas of Hawkesbury, Baulkham Hills and Hornsby
- 7 May 2001 – launch of the Hawkesbury Harvest web site
- October 2001 - the Spring/Summer Farm Gate Trail map was released with 34 destinations.
- October 2001 - Hawkesbury Harvest showcased the Hawkesbury as a food region for the first time at the Regional Flavours event at Darling Harbour. This was a very successful promotional event.
- March 2002 – Hawkesbury Harvest was Highly Commended in the Promotion and Marketing sub-category of the Agribusiness Category of the 2002 Western Sydney Industry Awards.
- April 2002 – launch of the Edition 1 of the new format Farm Gate Trail map with 38 destinations
- April 2002 - the Hawkesbury region was showcased as the 'Region on Show' at the Royal Easter Show. Hawkesbury Harvest worked in conjunction with Tourism Hawkesbury and other tourism bodies across the North West Region to present a united approach to promoting the Region as a whole.
- July 2002 - Hawkesbury Harvest was advised that the Tourism NSW office in New Zealand with input from Tourism Sydney produced 'Sydney and Surrounds – The Wines and Food Lover's Guide' which features three pages of excellent promotional material on food and wine experiences in the Hawkesbury Valley area, focusing on the Farm Gate Trail.
- August 2002 - Hawkesbury Harvest was Awarded Hawkesbury's Healthy City Challenge in recognition of activities in achieving better health for the community
- August 2002 - a sub-committee of Hawkesbury Harvest took the initiative and organized the first Hawkesbury Harvest Farmers and Gourmet Food Market at Castle Hill Showground. Approx 6000 people attended this market with 35 stallholders. Later monthly markets have had up to 10,000 people attend with more than 50 stall holders
- October 2002 - Hawkesbury Harvest received an International Award for 'Achievement in Regional Development Practice' from the Australia and New Zealand branch of the Regional Science Association International.
- December 2002 – The Cartographer of the Farm Gate Trail Map won the International Trade Map Association – Asia Pacific Cartography Section award for a Free Tourism
- March 2003 – Highly Commended in the Most Significant Contribution to Western Sydney by a Small to Medium Enterprise subcategory of the Business and Corporate Services category of the Western Sydney Industry Awards
- March 2003 – 24 local and overseas TV, film, radio, newspaper and magazine food experts visited the Farm Gate Trail to experience what is on offer particularly how an increasing number of restaurants are using local food in their menus.
- April 2003 – launch of Edition 2 of the Farm Gate Trail map with 35 destinations
- April 2003 – received a Highly Commended Award and a Special Award for an Outstanding Display at the Royal Easter Show
- July 2003 – received funding from Hornsby and Baulkham Hills Shire Councils to expand the Farm gate Trail into those local government areas

- September 2003 – received the Business Advisory Services Incorporated (BASI) 'Agribusiness Leadership' Award
- September 2003 – Co-hosted a visit to the Hawkesbury of 30 visitors including international trade representatives of 20 countries to view and experience the agricultural produce and value added products of the area
- October 2003 – The Minister for Western Sydney and Acting Planning Minister, Dianne Beamer announced Lend Lease/General property Trust as the winning tender for the Rouse Hill Development Centre. Hawkesbury Harvest is a partner in this project in this important regional project.
- March 2004 – launch of the revamped Hawkesbury Harvest web site and Edition 3 of the Farm Gate Trail Map with 42 destinations
- April 2004 – the Farm Gate Trail featured in Tourism Sydney's 'Feel Free' media newsletter

Over the past years the following has also occurred:

- A number of Open Farm Days have been conducted including The Craft Barn, Geranium Cottage, Fernbrook Botanical Gallery and Garden and Penrith Valley Oranges. Penrith Valley Oranges began the 2002 orange season by having a two-day Open Farm Day event, which attracted more than 6000 people and resulted in on-farm sales in the order of \$20,000. These events have brought many thousands of people into the Hawkesbury.
- The Saturday morning Hawkesbury Harvest segment on ABC radio 702 and at times 2UE is also bringing a significant number of people into the area.
- Hawkesbury Harvest members have been featured on all the TV life style programs such as Sydney Weekender, Getaway, Postcards, Landline, Gardening Australia, Andrew Ettinghausen's Lifestyle, and the Great Outdoors
- Hawkesbury Harvest has been featured in articles in Table Magazine, Gourmet Traveller, Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph, The Land, Sun Herald, and Hospitality Magazine and on a regular basis in the Hawkesbury Gazette, Hills Shire Times, Hills News, Hawkesbury Independent, Penrith Press, Hornsby Advocate and regional newspapers such as the Newcastle Herald-Weekender. All has been free editorial.