

Council considers implications of a CBD with fewer retailers

- **Matt Watson** - AUGUST 12 2019 - 10:55PM – WESTERN ADVOCATE

BATHURST Regional Council is planning now for the CBD of the future.

Economic development manager Steve Bowman says council is about to start work on a town centre masterplan that will factor in the rise of online shopping and the resulting change in bricks and mortar retailing.

"The town centre masterplan will set out not only how we'd like to see the town centre look in a number of years from now, but how we manage that transition [in changing shopping habits], which is obviously going to happen," he said.

"As we see the rise of online shopping and that tendency of people to want to source products online, it is going to change the retail landscape significantly, as it has everywhere else."

Long-time local retailer Bobbies Clothing closed its Bathurst store in January after 25 years to concentrate more on its online offering, while food and coffee operations have featured prominently among recent business additions to the centre of the city.

"We think the CBD's going to become much more service-based - accounting, law firms, real estate, use of different spaces for cafes and restaurants," Mr Bowman said.

"But we're going to see a real change with fewer retailers in the CBD.

"We're trying to not only plan for that, but plan for how we can reinvigorate the CBD through partnerships with organisations like Charles Sturt University."

It was reported in June that CSU was considering properties in the CBD to house a new campus.

"We see a vibrant new CBD precinct that builds upon all this city's heritage because that, as well as tourism, is attractive to students from outside the region," the university's David Bedwell told council that month.

"We see a CBD that has cultural and community stuff, it's got commercial and retail, it's got business and innovation and it could have research and education in the middle of it as well."

It's believed the TAFE building on William Street and former Clancy Motors site on Howick Street are two locations being considered.

Mr Bowman said council was "trying to put a lot of work and effort into how we can support CBD businesses and part of that is also to do with implementing smart technologies to make better use of green spaces in the CBD".

Under council's Smart Community initiative, a free public Wi-Fi service was switched on in the CBD in March this year.