



An Investigatory Report by Regional Development  
Australia (RDA) Sydney and Ku-ring-gai Council, and  
proudly supported by the NSW Small Business  
Commissioner

# Homebased Business Scoping in Ku-ring-gai

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# 1 Executive Summary

This report provides preliminary investigations into the Ku-ring-gai Council homebased business sector, to better understand the challenges they encounter. Through a broad survey and thorough interview process, this report identified a variety of major challenges and opportunities for Council to support this sector within the local area. The primary challenges faced by HBB include:

- Building the necessary skills to sustain and grow their business
- Working on the business fundamentals (sales, marketing, cash flow management, etc.)

From this, the key recommendations for Council to better support the homebased business sector are as follows (see Section 7 for complete recommendations).

<p>Re-defining and re-evaluating core vision, mission, and goals on HBB within Ku-ring-gai Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal strategy session – build out vision, mission and goals for engaging and supporting HBB</li> <li>• Identify Council priorities and desired outcomes to drive strategic planning</li> </ul>
<p>Focus on defining Council brand and position in alignment with these goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel Facebook page to actively showcase local business and be a centre for information around events, webinars and networking sessions             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aim to sit outside of Council regulation, and build a diverse community of local business</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strategic Partnerships with local business or local community platforms             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Deliver collaborative workshops, networking events</li> <li>○ Utilise partners marketing channels to shift brand awareness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Focus on engaging HBB directly and consistently across all marketing platforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run focus groups with a range of different HBB to identify key marketing channels to best reach the sector</li> <li>• Develop a marketing strategy that is centred around consistency and relevancy in content delivery</li> <li>• Content focus: HBB want to know and see what other HBB are doing</li> </ul>
<p>Make it simple to access necessary information across all platforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Ku-ring-gai Council HBB mission and goals into the website design             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clear UX/UI that highlights necessary information (business support/local database)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consistency across all platforms in posting necessary HBB information and advertising events</li> <li>• Utilising Facebook events functionality to actively promote workshops and networking events             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on building awareness</li> <li>○ Reducing barriers to engagement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Continue being present and engaged in the eco-system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to engage with other councils, community groups and commerce chambers to deliver a variety of opportunities for HBB</li> <li>• Continue to utilise all social media and online marketing tools available to develop an online presence to increase HBB awareness</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively build out Ku-ring-gai Council’s business network through upskilling workshops and networking events</li> </ul>
<p>Homebased businesses are crying out for a local database</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal discussions around how to best support and develop a local database of businesses. Drawing off current examples to deliver either an internally or externally integrated platform.</li> <li>• Database could provide the following functions (but is not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Look-up of other local business</li> <li>○ Advertising of own business and services</li> <li>○ Engagement tool (connection)</li> <li>○ Networking events run within database</li> <li>○ Upskilling events run within database</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Make HBB visible to other businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create team/role/project focused on conducting deep-dives into a range of local HBB and developing short informational films <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Journalistic in nature (develop a sense of empathy and understanding for the audience)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Utilise current marketing channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Website) to broadcast these HBB to other local businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on consistency in delivery to ensure maximum engagement across business sector</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Business run trade-shows / information nights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Engage local HBB to run information/upskilling nights around key challenges faced by HBB including marketing, graphic design, managing your website, cash flow, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Drive local collaboration through business-led initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups with specifically creative industry HBB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ideate and identify a variety of HBB driven initiatives that support community and connect HBB</li> <li>○ Delivering policy that could support these initiatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Opportunity to engage third party vendors to deliver these (reduce need for Council resources) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pariter – Plenary: delivering community focused outcomes through private financing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

In conclusion, more research and collaborative engagement is needed with the homebased business sector within Ku-ring-gai Council to further validate these recommendations and co-create a program that best supports the local sector.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Ku-ring-gai Council

Ku-ring-gai Council is a Local Government Area (LGA) located in northern Sydney, in NSW. As of 2019, the population is 127,153 people. The majority of the population live in and around the centres of St Ives, Gordon, Pymble, and Lindfield. More background information on Ku-ring-gai Council includes:

- More than 50% of residents within the LGA have received a bachelor or higher degree, and
- 46% of household incomes are earning above \$2,500 weekly (Economy .id, 2020).

The area is primarily residential with one business park, and around 18,000 local businesses (ABR data). With only a minor portion of these registered businesses owning a shopfront in the local area, there is a large amount of economic activity within the homebased business and small business sector that operate outside of bricks and mortar stores (see Figure 1).

Additionally, over 1 in 10 people work within their own home across the LGA, with 13.1% of total workers method of travel to work as “work at home”.

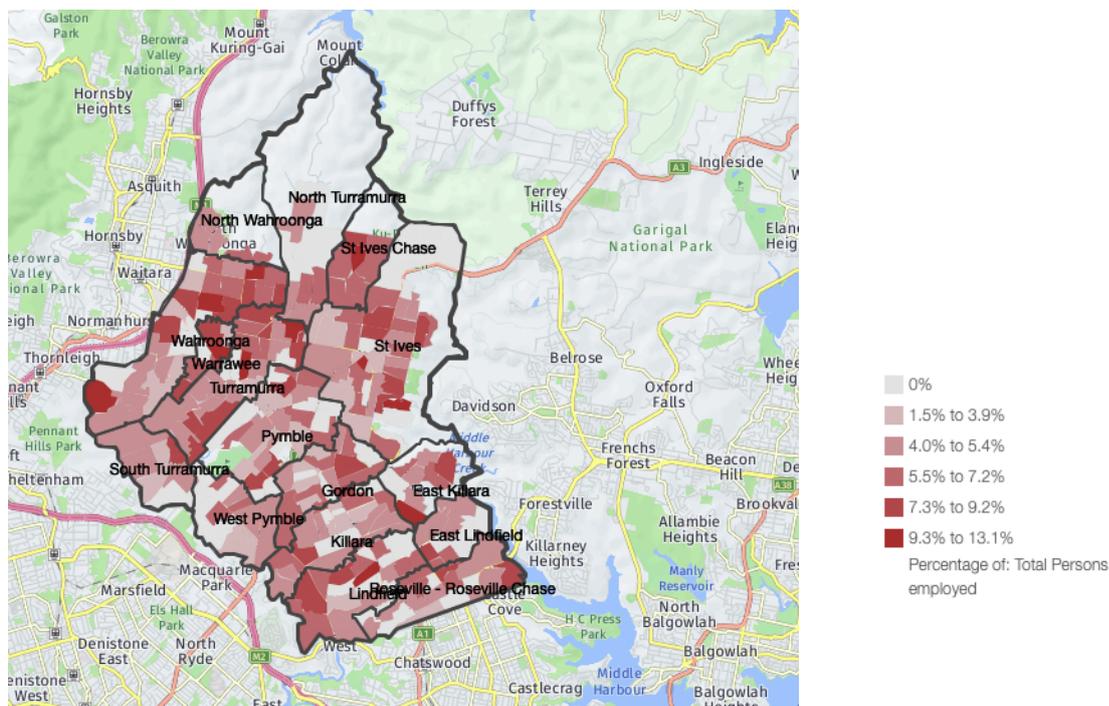


Figure 1: Homebased as % of Total Employed

Based on census data from 2016 (Economy .id, 2020), the largest employer within the Ku-ring-gai Local Government Area are:

- Health Care and Social Assistance sector
- Education and Training sector, and
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sector.

These three fields account for over 50% of the workforce, with professionals being the majority occupation.

Ku-ring-gai Council is dedicated to supporting all the residents within the LGA, focusing on support and collaboration, aiming to build a community that flourishes in both wellbeing and economic prosperity.

## **2.2 Regional Development Australia (RDA) Sydney**

Regional Development Australia Sydney is a not-for-profit association funded by the Australian Government and part of a network around Australia. RDA Sydney's key objectives are to support economic growth and jobs across the 33 Local Government Areas of Sydney.

RDA Sydney often works in collaboration with councils on projects relevant to their areas including scoping business sectors, procurement policies, linkages to investors and industry-specific initiatives such as agribusiness, aerospace and defence.

## **2.3 Homebased Businesses (HBB)**

### **2.3.1 Definition of HBB**

A homebased business as defined by the NSW Small Business Commission as, "...a business that is carried on in a dwelling, or in a building ancillary to a dwelling..." (Small Business Commissioner, 2020). Furthermore, for the purposes of simplification, we have further defined HBB as the primary location where the majority of business is carried out at the business owner's dwelling. This focuses the scope of our research away from trades and HBB that mainly operate outside the home, but have their residential address listed in their business information.

### **2.3.2 Australian Context**

In their most recent research, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) identified that HBBs constitute 58% of all businesses within Australia and the annual growth rate of the sector is 16% (Walker, Bode, Burn, & Webster, 2003). ABS ceased collecting data on HBB after this research. Burgess and Paguio (2016) discussed how the growth of HBB was related to a restriction in full-time salaried employment opportunities (Burgess & Paguio, 2016). This can be directly observed in our current pandemic, in which the HBB sector could potentially be growing at a faster rate than previously observed.

### **2.3.3 Ku-ring-gai Data**

Census data from 2016 identified that the majority of the workforce operating at home within the Ku-ring-gai Council LGA is within the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Sector (see Figure 2).

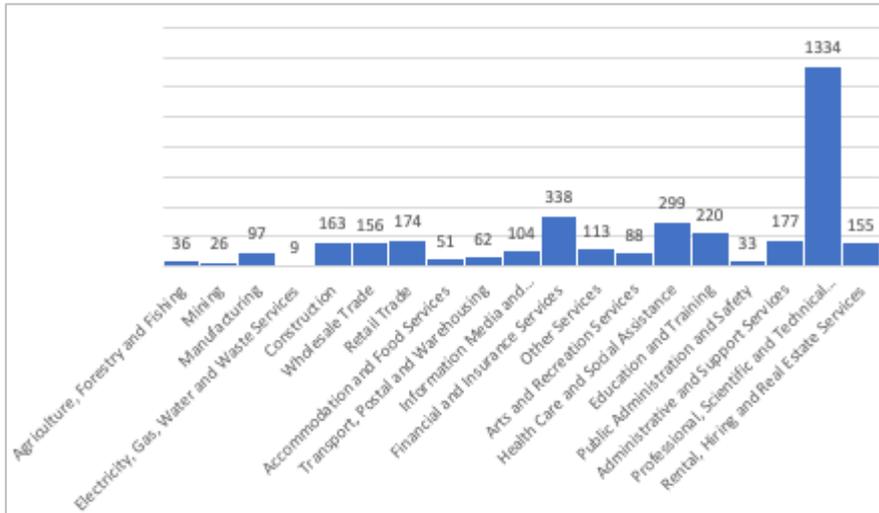


Figure 2: Industry of employment of people who work from home in Ku-ring-gai LGA (Source: ABS 2016 Census)

Although this data discusses work from home arrangements, it fails to identify if this employment is within HBB, thus can only be used as a proxy to indicate the industry sectors of people working from home.

## 3 Needs Assessment

### 3.1 Problem Definition

Ku-ring-gai Council has identified that HBB play a significant role in the local economy. These HBB have a low profile due to their working from home set-up and lack of clear reporting about their activity. Ku-ring-gai Council has identified this business segment as being of high importance and are eager to better engage and support them. Ku-ring-gai Council runs a suite of business support and outreach programs including networking, upskilling and access to advisory services, but is unsure whether these programs are having a positive impact.

Due to the increased prevalence of remote working in response to the COVID pandemic, strong growth is envisaged in the number of HBB over the short to medium-term. In order to provide optimal support to HBB, local and state governments require an increased awareness of the sector. SME is said to be the lifeblood of the Australian community (Carmody, 2015), and with a major proportion of SME being homebased, it is vital to better understand how to support and sustain these businesses.

### 3.2 Project Objectives

Through discussion with both Ku-ring-gai Council and Regional Development Australia (RDA) Sydney, the following project objectives was identified.

*Table 1: Project Objectives*

1	<b>To gather primary data on the key business sectors and operating environments of HBBs within Ku-ring-gai Council</b>
2	<b>To understand the key challenges, needs and motivations of HBBs operating within Ku-ring-gai Council</b>
3	<b>To identify a range of strategies and programs that Ku-ring-gai Council can develop and implement to effectively support, connect and sustain the local HBB sector.</b>

These objectives outline the core focus of the investigations conducted within this report, aiming to guide Ku-ring-gai Council in implementing programs that will sustain the HBB sector and drive economic prosperity within the LGA.

## 4 Policy and Strategic Alignment

The following table aligns the key policy objectives and actions from the NSW Government with project objectives.

Table 2: Policy and Strategic Alignment

POLICY DOCUMENT	POLICY OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT
<b>NORTHERN DISTRICT PLAN, GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION (GSC)</b> (GSC, 2018)	<b>Objective 22.</b> Investment and business activity in centres	<b>Project Objective 2 &amp; 3.</b> In supporting and sustaining the local HBB sector, there is potential for economic growth within SMEs. With growth, smaller companies look to invest and increase business activity within local town centres.
	<b>Action 36.a</b> Attracting significant investment and business activity in strategic centres providing jobs growth	<b>Project Objective 2 &amp; 3.</b> <i>*see above</i>
	<b>Action 36.b</b> Diversifying range of activities in all centres	<b>Project Objective 3</b> Better support networks and services within Ku-ring-gai Council for the HBB sector will give rise to a wider variety of economic activity. This will naturally progress to local town centres and newly identified strategic hubs.
	<b>Action 37</b> Create new centres in accordance with the Principles for Greater Sydney's centres	<b>Project Objective 3</b> <i>*see above</i>
	<b>Action 39.</b> Encourage opportunities for new smart work hubs	<b>Objective 1, 2, &amp; 3</b> Understanding the nature of HBB within Ku-ring-gai Council, and better understanding how to connect these businesses could drive localised virtual hubs. Moving into a post-Covid world, these hubs of connectivity between SMEs will be a major economic driver and employer.
	<b>Action 40</b> Review the current planning controls and create capacity to achieve job targets for each of the District's strategic centres	<b>Objective 1, 2, &amp; 3</b> Achieving job targets is driven through an increase in employment within each local LGA. Through better understanding and supporting the HBB sector, Ku-ring-gai Council can support these HBB in growth and prosperity, driving an increase in localised employment.
<b>NSW SMALL BUSINESS STRATEGY, NSW GOVERNMENT</b> (NSW GOVERNMENT, 2020)	<b>Initiative 2.</b> Investing in new skills for business	<b>Objective 3</b> Developing programs that support local business directly invests into upskilling and networking opportunities for individuals operating HBB
	<b>Initiative 6</b> Providing tools to build resilient business	<b>Objective 1,2, &amp; 3</b> Programs that focus on upskilling and networking provide opportunities for HBB to expand out their client base, enhance their operations and build resilience into their business models.

## 5 Methodology & Approach

### **Step 1: Defining an HBB**

The first step in the project was to define “HBB”. This provided the basis for our research and established the scope of what was included in our investigations. From this definition and understanding of Ku-ring-gai Council’s strategic direction was, project objectives were then established to guide research and analysis.

### **Step 2: Preliminary Research**

Preliminary research was conducted in the form of desktop research into academic articles published on HBB and analysis of available research including economic and census data sourced from:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics,
- Office of the Small Business Commissioner, and
- Flying Solo.

Preliminary interviews were also conducted through a series of established networks and cold calling with local HBB supporters (We classify these stakeholders as a group of individuals who play a role in supporting the HBB sector. This includes but is not limited to accountants, lawyers, marketers, advocacy groups and individuals.) All qualitative data was collected, and key themes were identified and quantified to give indication of discussion trends across the range of conversations. An initial set of hypotheses were identified around the core potential challenges faced by Ku-ring-gai Council in better supporting the HBB sector within the LGA.

### **Step 3: Scoping Survey**

Following our identification of trends and issues, in collaboration with Ku-ring-gai Council, a short survey was built that focused on a variety of issues, with an opportunity to provide contact details. This provided a list of HBB operating within Ku-ring-gai Council to engage with and conduct further in-depth discussions. (see Attachment: Interview Objectives and Template)

### **Step 4: In-depth interviews**

Based on information collected in both the survey and preliminary investigations, an interview template was drafted (see Attachment: Interview Template and Objectives), with a focus on better understanding the goals and objectives, challenges, and support needs of the HBB sector in Ku-ring-gai Council area. Once the interviews had been conducted, key themes were again analysed across all the data collected, and trends were identified.

### **Step 5: Hypothesis Testing and Conclusions**

From the data collected, both qualitative and quantitative information was compared, and trends in significant challenges and support networks were identified. The initial hypothesis was then tested against the new data, and final conclusions around HBB within Ku-ring-gai Council were drawn.

### **Step 6: Conclusion Discussion and Identification of Recommendations**

Once conclusions had been drawn based on our hypotheses, recommendations were drawn, based on a variety of best practice processes, case studies, and benchmarks. These recommendations were then brought back to Ku-ring-gai Council, where discussion was held around the feasibility and viability of the range of recommendations in aligning with the organisation's goals and objectives.

#### **Step 7: Report and Final Recommendations**

Extensive and robust report drafted and collaborated on by range of invested stakeholders to best present and discuss the data in order to provide a basis of investigation for further HBB studies. Final recommendations drafted and presented to Ku-ring-gai Council.

## 6 Analysis & Findings

### 6.1 Preliminary Research

#### 6.1.1 Research Summary

Although there are a wide variety of different HBB, operating across different industries and sectors, common challenges and needed support were clearly evident across all research, interviews and data. As HBB are generally started as “passion projects”, or in areas of technical expertise, the main challenges that arise for owners are:

- Building the necessary skills to sustain and grow their business
- Working on the business fundamentals (sales, marketing, cash flow management, etc.)

These initial challenges are underpinned by a range of secondary challenges, which include:

- Limited awareness of the business support services available
- Time management
- Limited opportunities for social interaction and business networking

These are the areas of opportunities to assist and support the HBB sector in sustaining and growing.

#### 6.1.2 Preliminary Research

##### 6.1.2.1 Academic Research

There has been little to no academic research conducted into HBB sector within Australia, with recent research discussing key niches in the Australian HBB market including adoption of technology (Burgess & Paguio, 2016) among HBB and a broader discussion on HBB in the OECD (Reuschke & Domecka, 2018) and the key policy changes that could support and growth the HBB sector. These articles can be used as a base for our research, in defining our initial assumptions of HBB trends, challenges and needed support.

Reuschke & Domecka (2018) identified a variety of key trends and commonalities across all HBB owners within OECD. They concluded that the main individual drivers behind operating an HBB were reduction of operating costs and flexibility and lifestyle with HBB ambitions to keep small and restrict growth. Their focus was on utilising public policy to better support the creation and development of HBB through provision of mentoring and business advice, making sure all HBB owners have access to the advice they need to sustain their business. Reuschke & Domecka (2018) also suggested offering of more flexible co-working space and meeting spaces for HBB entrepreneurs with specific needs.

Reuschke & Mason (2020) identified that in times of rapid digitisation, the acceleration of creative industries increases and becomes more significant. In relation to COVID-19, society has seen a fast-paced change in digital integration with business processes. Greater significance was then placed on the utilisation of online connectivity platforms within the HBB communities to continually drive collaboration between very isolated businesses. Reuschke & Mason (2020) further suggested that government role should go beyond investing into more infrastructure, as it is unlikely that HBB activity increases with better broadband (Reuschke & Mason, 2020). There should be a bigger focus on building support networks and collaboration utilising digital infrastructure to grow and sustain these businesses.

### **6.1.2.2 Small Business Commissioner Data**

In 2018-2019, the Office of the Small Business Commissioner conducted a NSW Home Business survey across the state to better understand the HBB sector. The survey was distributed through several channels and received over 450 responses (Office of the Small Business Commissioner, 2019).

Some of the key findings include:

- Majority of HBB are single owner employees
- Among HBB owners there is a lack of awareness of support services that are available
- Majority of HBB are looking to engage in networking and local collaboration
- Most HBB are overloaded with inconsistent information

The major challenges identified include (see Appendix 10.5 for full table):

- Managing work-life balance (52% of respondents identified)
- Finding clients (46% of respondents identified)
- Managing cash flow (42% of respondents identified)
- Advertising my business (38% of respondents identified)

OSBC also identified that a majority of businesses participate in a range of networking sessions (see Appendix 10.6), with most engaging in multiple different streams of collaboration.

### **6.1.2.3 HBB Supporter Interviews**

Through the preliminary research phase, several HBB supporters were identified who play a direct role in both supporting and working with the local HBB sector. These include professionals operating as business consultants, accountants, marketing firms, banks and individuals engaged in operating networking groups and vocational studies.

Analysis of themes across interviews (see Attachment 1: Research Analysis) with these supporters indicates that the major challenges faced by HBBs include awareness of the support that is available, followed by marketing, social interaction, networking, work-life balance, and growth. The majority of these issues are focused around collaboration and connection with other businesses.

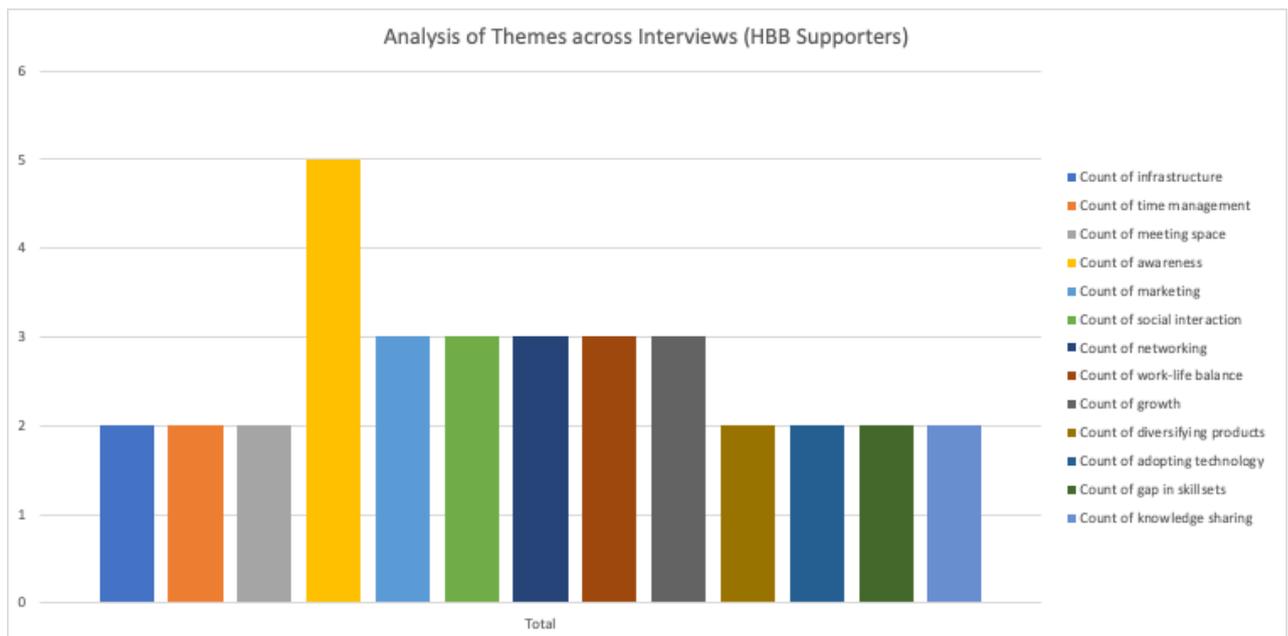


Figure 3: Quantitative Analysis of Key Themes in HBB Supporter Interviews

One explanation for awareness being the major issue is due to the nature and demographic of people who choose to run an HBB. It was discussed that HBB owners are technically adept at building or delivering on their particular product or service, but fail to work on the business, not just in it. Combined with time restraints typically common among HBB, results in business owners not being aware of the support services and information they can access. This awareness may also be indicative of an overload of information, where business owners are faced with lack of clear and consistent information on regulatory and business requirements (see SBC data).

Overall, the interviews with HBB supporters highlighted a range of common themes and issues of HBB being ability to navigate large amounts of information and invest time into their business to produce collaboration and develop effective business processes that support success and growth.

### 6.1.3 Community/Networking Groups

#### 6.1.3.1 Business Network International (BNI) Australia

BNI Australia is a private organisation that operates small networking groups globally that focus on close networking circles and referrals for individual members (BNI, 2020). Small groups are found all across Sydney, with member size ranging from 10 - 40. There is a strict protocol to allow only one of each profession into the group to maximise referral capacity and reduce any internal politics that may cause disruption with members relationships. Members pay admittance and annual fees of around \$1600 p.a., and each group has a governance structure to maintain goal setting and internal order.

Table 3: BNI SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on small, intimate groups that build strong relationships</li> <li>• Only one of each profession to reduce politics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hierarchical structure within group to maximise effectiveness and keep members accountable</li> </ul>	
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group effectiveness and driving growth and revenue for members</li> </ul>

Drawing on this platform, we can identify that small networking sessions provide value in building clientele for businesses involved. Although this model is successful, challenges may arise in Council implementing this across the LGA.

### 6.1.3.2 *Flying Solo*

Flying solo is an online community that focuses on supporting solo run businesses, through connecting micro-businesses with each other, providing easy and accessible learning through online articles and blogging, and facilitating a suite of different workshops and events for their members (Flying Solo, 2020). The platform is a paid platform with over 100,000 registered members, that focuses on building a local community through engagement and collaboration, providing micro-businesses with all the resources they need to effectively and efficiently run their business.

Every few years, Flying Solo conduct extensive user research on their members with the core aim to better understand the demographics of their members, and identify common needs and challenges faced by micro-business so they can design better and more targeted support services. The most recent survey was conducted in 2016-17 and had over 1000 responses from their members (Flying Solo, 2017). Some of the key findings within include:

- 65% of all their micro-businesses are homebased
- Traditional word of mouth followed by social network is top new source for business
- 53% have been in business for 3+ years

Overall, Flying Solo has effectively engaged and supported micro-businesses across Australia for over a decade, building a community based on collaboration and support.

*Table 4: Flying Solo SWOT Analysis*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online community that consistently engages and supports each other through forums and business led workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on business promotion creates supportive culture (highlights what other people are doing)</li> <li>Robin Hood business model – acts as the facilitator for other sponsors to run events</li> </ul>

### **Interview with Robert Gerrish (see Attachment: Research Analysis, HBB Supporter Interviews, Section 11)**

In an interview with Robert Gerrish, the founder of Flying Solo, some of the main challenges HBB identified from his personal experience working with and around micro-businesses during his time with Flying Solo were the gap in their skillsets, the overload of information from the online world, and time management.

The core skillset identified by Robert as lacking among small business owners is the ability to work on the business, not just in it. Building and growing a business on your own can be difficult and challenging, and most fail to effectively invest in branding and marketing their business. This was a key theme across all the surveys conducted by Flying Solo and signals a lack of both education and ability to manage their time and focus on the business fundamentals that will ultimately allow them to succeed in operating and sustaining their business.

Mr. Gerrish also discussed some key techniques to engaging with HBB, including the use of community engagement methods. One focus was to provide HBB with visibility of other HBB methods and techniques. This community focus is built through consistent engagement and management of networking and conversational platforms.

*“You need a community manager who is constantly tickling it, driving the conversation, engaging with each other regularly.” – Robert Gerrish (see Attachment 1: Research Analysis)*

#### **6.1.3.3 Facebook Community Groups – Ku-ring-gai Living / North Shore Mums**

Networking groups of Facebook have quickly been popularised as a place of discussion and engagement with local community members and businesses. Another alternative to Facebook groups includes online community forums and blogs. There are several community groups operating within Ku-ring-gai Council (Ku-ring-gai Living & North Shore Mums), but neither of these groups focus on Ku-ring-gai Business connection and collaboration, with a broader focus on the entire community.

#### **6.1.3.4 Localised – B2B Network and Engagement Platform**

Localised is a third-party vendor that contracts to a variety of different councils to provide a platform that allows connection and collaboration between local businesses (Localised, 2020). It focuses on building a digitally connected community.

*Table 5: Localised SWOT Analysis*

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An all-in-one platform that provides visualisation of local business, networking opportunities, and even tendering facilities for business to interact and engage with each other</li></ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased connection and networking opportunities</li><li>• Promoting the “go local” focus of councils in a continuously more globalised society</li></ul>

#### **6.1.4 Summary**

There are clear similarities across each of the platforms investigated- they all aim to bring together and spur local collaboration between individuals, communities and business. Support and mentoring are key to driving better business outcomes and focusing on these areas is where a majority of time is being spent. Platforms with faster and more efficient methods of connection seem to be more popular with higher levels of engagement as users can depend on these platforms for consistent and reliable information and connections. Across all preliminary research, HBB face similar challenges. These challenges can be overcome through awareness to the range of different support networks, in which HBB can choose the platform that best suits their needs.

### **6.2 Survey Data**

#### **6.2.1 Results**

We surveyed a total of 51 HBB owners using a variety of different communication channels including Facebook, direct email and Instagram engagement. (See Appendix 10.1 for survey questions)

The main findings from the sample include:

- The most common industry operating within Ku-ring-gai LGA are professional, scientific and technical services
- The main drivers behind owning/operating an HBB are:
  - Flexibility
  - Business control, and
  - Provide primary income stream
- Average of 20% negative impact in business performance due to Covid
- Range of issues challenging HBB including marketing, networking, social isolation, business education, and co-working/meeting space.

To see all results, see Attachment 2: Survey Results

### **6.3 Interview Results and Findings**

#### **6.3.1 Results**

From the survey, 16 interviews were conducted with HBB from a variety of different sectors including professional, scientific and technical services to creative industries. Most of the HBB were owner-operated and primarily established to provide the founder with flexibility in their work schedule or following a passion. Although not indicative of the entire HBB sector within Ku-ring-gai Council, the majority of HBB were owned by women (58.8%). This

Across all the interviews conducted, consistent themes were identified as major challenges in operating and owning an HBB (see Figure 4). Majority of HBB interviewed were single employee organisations, highlighting the de-centralised nature of the sector within Ku-ring-gai Council.

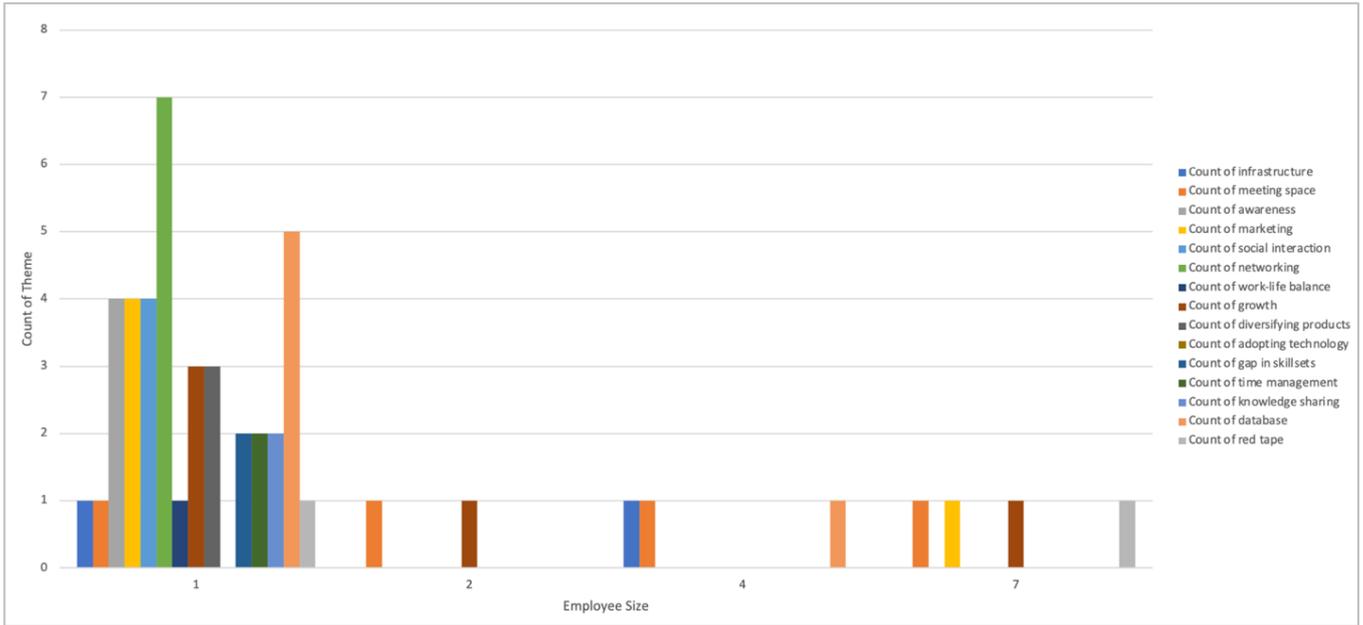


Figure 4: Themes identified during HBB interviews (Themes vs. Employee Size)

The main challenges identified are:

1. Networking opportunities (in particular physical opportunities)
2. Need for a data-base of local business
3. Marketing, social interaction, awareness of services

These interviews align with all the preliminary research conducted in both desktop research and interviews with HBB supporters, confirming the same key issues faced by all the HBB sector. To see all notes, see Attachment 1: Research Analysis.

## 7 Recommendations



### 7.1 Part 1

<p>Re-defining and re-evaluating core vision, mission, and goals on HBB within Ku-ring-gai Council</p>	<p>The HBB sector is an invisible and fragmented business sector. Within Ku-ring-gai Council specifically, based on both census data and survey data (see Section 2), there is a major presence of HBB operating within the area. With Ku-ring-gai Councils drive to better support local HBB, it is vital that they first define and evaluate their vision and mission in regard to HBB, and then from that to develop a set of goals (Collins &amp; Porras, 1996). Actively engaging in long term planning around HBB will provide a road map for Ku-ring-gai Council in achieving their core objective of better supporting HBB within the local area.</p>
<p>Key Data to Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 2: HBB a major economic driver in Ku-ring-gai Council is HBB</li> <li>• (Collins &amp; Porras, 1996) – Focus and direction vital to success</li> </ul>
<p>Next Steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal strategy session – build out vision, mission and goals for engaging and supporting HBB</li> <li>• Identify Council priorities and desired outcomes to drive strategic planning</li> </ul>

## 7.2 Part 2

<p>Focus on defining Council brand and position in alignment with these goals</p>	<p>One of the most common issues seen across all the data was a lack of awareness of the support services that Ku-ring-gai Council offered (workshops, networking events, etc.), as well as awareness of the support services provided by both ServiceNSW and Realise Business (see Section 6). Through both interviews with HBB supporters and HBB, three conclusions can be made: HBB aren't made aware of these services, they don't have the time to be involved within the support networks or they don't see the value in these services for their business. Unfortunately, Council may not be able to reach HBB who don't want to be reached but addressing the lack of awareness of HBB within their area is possible.</p> <p>In alignment with goals set around approaching and supporting HBB, brand and position of Ku-ring-gai Council is vital in shifting mindset away from regulatory and "red-tape" perspectives from HBB, and towards a representation of support and opportunity.</p>
<p>Key Data to Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 6, <b>Figure 3</b>: Lack of awareness key trend in data</li> <li>• (Sujan &amp; Bettman, 1989) – Effect of Brand and Positioning</li> <li>• (EquiBrand Consulting, 2020) – Brand Positioning strategy</li> <li>• (Darretta, 2019) – Using partnerships to improve Brand's image</li> </ul>
<p>Next Steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel Facebook page to actively showcase local business and be a centre for information around events, webinars and networking sessions             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aim to sit outside of Council regulation, and build a diverse community of local business</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strategic Partnerships with local business or local community platforms             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Deliver collaborative workshops, networking events</li> <li>○ Utilise partners marketing channels to shift brand awareness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 7.3 Part 3

<p>Focus on engaging HBB directly and consistently across all marketing platforms</p>	<p>Engaging HBB directly hasn't been done before, with primarily a focus being on small business. Although a majority % of small business is made up of HBB, there are different needs and challenges faced by the different business sectors. In alignment with the Ku-ring-gai Council's HBB vision and mission, Ku-ring-gai Council should develop a marketing and content strategy that directly engages HBB and focuses on communicating with them across a range of different platforms. As seen in our data, awareness was a key issue. Targeted and consistent marketing based on a re-branding towards support and opportunity will ultimately</p>
<p>Key Data to Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 6, <b>Figure 3</b>: Lack of awareness key trend in data</li> <li>• 6.1.3.2 <b>Flying Solo</b>: Robert Gerrish – Focus on consistency</li> </ul>

Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liverpool Council: Facebook page that regularly broadcasts “Support Local” videos. These are deep dives into local business operating within the LGA (Liverpool Council, 2020)</li> </ul>
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run focus groups with a range of different HBB to identify key marketing channels to best reach the sector</li> <li>• Develop a marketing strategy that is centred around consistency and relevancy in content delivery</li> <li>• Content focus: HBB want to know and see what other HBB are doing</li> </ul>

## 7.4 Part 4

Make it simple to access necessary information across all platforms	<p>Simplicity for business owners is key to reducing barriers to engagement that come with complexity in navigation and identification of services available. Due to the massive time restraints that face a majority of HBB owners, quick and easy access to the relevant sources of information is vital to developing awareness of these available services across both local and state government organisations.</p> <p>This simplicity should be consistent across all marketing channels and platforms (website, social media, emails). Ease in access will drive awareness and increase HBB satisfaction when engaging with Council’s marketing channels.</p>
Key Data to Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (SWEOR, 2020) – Website design is vital to effectively engaging customers and making their experience as enjoyable as possible.</li> <li>• (Kulbyte, 2020) – Customers expect to receive a consistent experience across all communication platforms. PWC also found more than 80% of companies investing in omni-channel experience.</li> </ul>
Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Liverpool Council, 2020) – Website design highlights section for business support. Also utilise Facebook to highlight a variety of local businesses.</li> <li>• (Hills Shire Council, 2020) – Website design highlights section for business support.</li> <li>• “People aren’t aware of what goes on through council. It is hard to break through the general noise.” – See Notes from HBB Interviews (from Surveys, Section 12)</li> </ul>
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Ku-ring-gai Council HBB mission and goals into the website design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clear UX/UI that highlights necessary information (business support/local database)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consistency across all platforms in posting necessary HBB information and advertising events</li> <li>• Utilising Facebook events functionality to actively promote workshops and networking events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on building awareness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Reduce barriers to engagement

## 7.5 Part 5

Continue being present and engaged in the ecosystem	Across all of the interviews conducted (see Attachment Research Analysis), there was an overwhelming message the Ku-ring-gai Council is effectively engaging and supporting the HBB sector. This engagement and presence should be consistent and continued indefinitely. When HBB engagement grows with time and awareness of services increases, these networking, upskilling and support events need to be available.
Key Data to Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interviews (see Attachment Research Analysis) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ See Notes from HBB Support Interviews, Section 9, 11, 12</li> <li>○ See Notes from HBB Interviews (from Surveys), Section 4, 6, 8,12,16</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Will Adames from Council is really good. I have built some great contacts through the sessions.” – See Notes from HBB Interviews (from Surveys), Section 12</li> </ul>
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to engage with other councils, community groups and commerce chambers to deliver a variety of opportunities for HBB</li> <li>● Continue to utilise all social media and online marketing tools available to develop an online presence to increase HBB awareness</li> <li>● Actively build out Ku-ring-gai Council’s business network through upskilling workshops and networking events</li> </ul>

## 7.6 Part 6

Homebased businesses are crying out for a local database	<p>With the continuous expansions of globalisation, small business has suffered with large business dominating the market. Mindset within individual communities has rapidly shifting back to supporting local. Particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting local business through a crisis has been a focus for both local, state and federal government in keeping the economy alive.</p> <p>Across multiple interviews with local HBB, there is a clear want for a database that provides local businesses the opportunity to advertise their services and find other local businesses to partner with and/or support.</p>
Key Data to Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Across a majority of HBB interviews, supporting local business was a key theme. Additionally, 40% of HBB during the interviews specifically asking</li> </ul>

	<p>for a database of local businesses to provide an advertising channel for their services and to connect with other local businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Table 5: Localised SWOT Analysis</b> – Strengths of Localised is their ability to build an extensive database of</li> </ul>
Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Liverpool Council, 2020) – a local business database integrated into their website. Provides local business with an opportunity to register their name, and connect with other local businesses</li> <li>• (Localised, 2020) – an online platform that provides councils the capability to build an online community of local business (see <b>Localised – B2B Network and Engagement Platform</b>)</li> <li>• (Monash, 2020) – Host an externally integrated database that provides local business the opportunity to advertise their services and connect with other local business</li> </ul>
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal discussions around how to best support and develop a local database of businesses. Drawing off current examples to deliver either an internally or externally integrated platform.</li> <li>• Database could provide the following functions (but is not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Look-up of other local business</li> <li>○ Advertising of own business and services</li> <li>○ Engagement tool (connection)</li> <li>○ Networking events run within database</li> <li>○ Upskilling events run within database</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 7.7 Part 7

Make HBB visible to other businesses	<p>With awareness a key challenge for HBB, followed closely by the need to network and build new skillsets to effectively run a business, visibility of other HBB can play an important role in supporting growth within the highly de-centralised sector. This program would develop an additional capability within Ku-ring-gai Council that actively highlights and promotes local business, providing visibility to the HBB sector whilst simultaneously shifting brand positioning towards one of support for the sector.</p>
Key Data to Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews (see Attachment Research Analysis) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ See notes from HBB Support Interviews, Section 11, 14</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Liverpool Council, 2020) - Facebook page that regularly broadcasts “Support Local” videos. These are deep dives into local business operating within the LGA</li> <li>• (Flying Solo, 2020) - The Flying Solo platform regularly posts a variety of videos either of or made by micro-business members. These videos range in content and support all members on the platform through collective knowledge.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (UTS Start-ups, 2020) – UTS Start-ups is a progressive and start-up focused faculty operating within University of Technology, Sydney. UTS Start-ups regularly highlight their start-ups on their private Facebook page through videos, whilst driving conversation between the student-led start-ups through regular posting and administrator engagement.</li> </ul>
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create team/role/project focused on conducting deep-dives into a range of local HBB and developing short informational films <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Journalistic in nature (develop a sense of empathy and understanding for the audience)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Utilise current marketing channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Website) to broadcast these HBB to other local businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on consistency in delivery to ensure maximum engagement across business sector</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Business run trade-shows / information nights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Engage local HBB to run information/upskilling nights around key challenges faced by HBB including marketing, graphic design, managing your website, cash flow, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 7.8 Part 8

Drive local collaboration through business-led initiatives	<p>To effectively build a community, Robert Gerrish discussed the need to implement frameworks and cultivate environments that support collaboration (see <b>Flying Solo</b>). This focus on facilitating the engagement is a role that council can and does play a significant part, developing and delivering initiatives that foster collaboration. Antony D’Cruz from ServiceNSW identified that a majority of HBB are passion projects, with an overwhelming focus towards creative outlets including candle making, soaps, homemade foods, arts, etc. As identified by Kanak Kiran (see Section <b>Error! Reference source not found.</b>), there is an opportunity for local business collaboration around the council. There is an opportunity for Council to work with local HBB operating in arts and creative industries to co-create programs that deliver value for the community and drive HBB connections and visibility. Some key examples include collaboration around public areas, commercial centres, and other key pieces of Ku-ring-gai Council infrastructure.</p>
Key Data to Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews (see Attachment 1: Research Analysis) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HBB Supporter Interviews, Section 8, 10, 11</li> <li>○ HBB Interviews, Section 2</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups with specifically creative industry HBB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ideate and identify a variety of HBB driven initiatives that support community and connect HBB</li> <li>○ Delivering policy that could support these initiatives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Opportunity to engage third party vendors to deliver these (reduce need for Council resources)
  - Pariter – Plenary: delivering community focused outcomes through private financing (Plenary, 2020)

## 8 Conclusions

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### **Plan:**

- Discuss the need for further research
  - The importance of supporting this sector moving forward
  - The application of this methodology across Sydney to support HBB
  - The role that council can play without funding in supporting these businesses
- 

This preliminary scoping of the homebased business sector within Ku-ring-gai Council has demonstrated the overall alignment of challenges across majority of small and micro businesses operating across Australia. With homebased work being accelerated even further due to the global pandemic, it is vital that this research be continued in more depth to further identify the best support to offer these businesses in both transitioning to work from home set-ups or diversifying their services to survive in a challenging environment.

Local, state and federal government already play an integral role in supporting this sector, but there are opportunities with little resourcing needed to further sustain and grow these HBB. With visibility being the greatest challenge to Government around this sector, a shift in thinking towards understanding and collecting targeted data may be the first step in identifying the more complex problems faced by all HBB.

Overall, there is an abundance of support for HBB available, but there needs to be a bridge built between these de-centralised businesses and the support services available.

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## 10 Appendix

### 10.1 Survey Questions

1. Do you operate a home-based business?
2. Is the home-based business based in Ku-ring-gai?
3. What industry are you currently operating in?
4. More specifically, what is your business type? (e.g. accountant, caterer, hairdresser)
5. We want to know why you run a home-based business. Read the following statements and indicate your level of agreement with each. I run my home-based business...
6. How is your business performing currently?
7. Identify 3 areas of support that could help improve your business performance?
8. Using the sliding scale, please indicate the impact COVID-19 pandemic has had on your business.
9. Would you be available to participate in a 15-minute interview to discuss how your home-based business can be supported in the future?
10. If you are available for an interview, please provide your contact details. We'll be in touch to arrange the session.

### 10.2 Attachment 1: Research Analysis

See attachment.

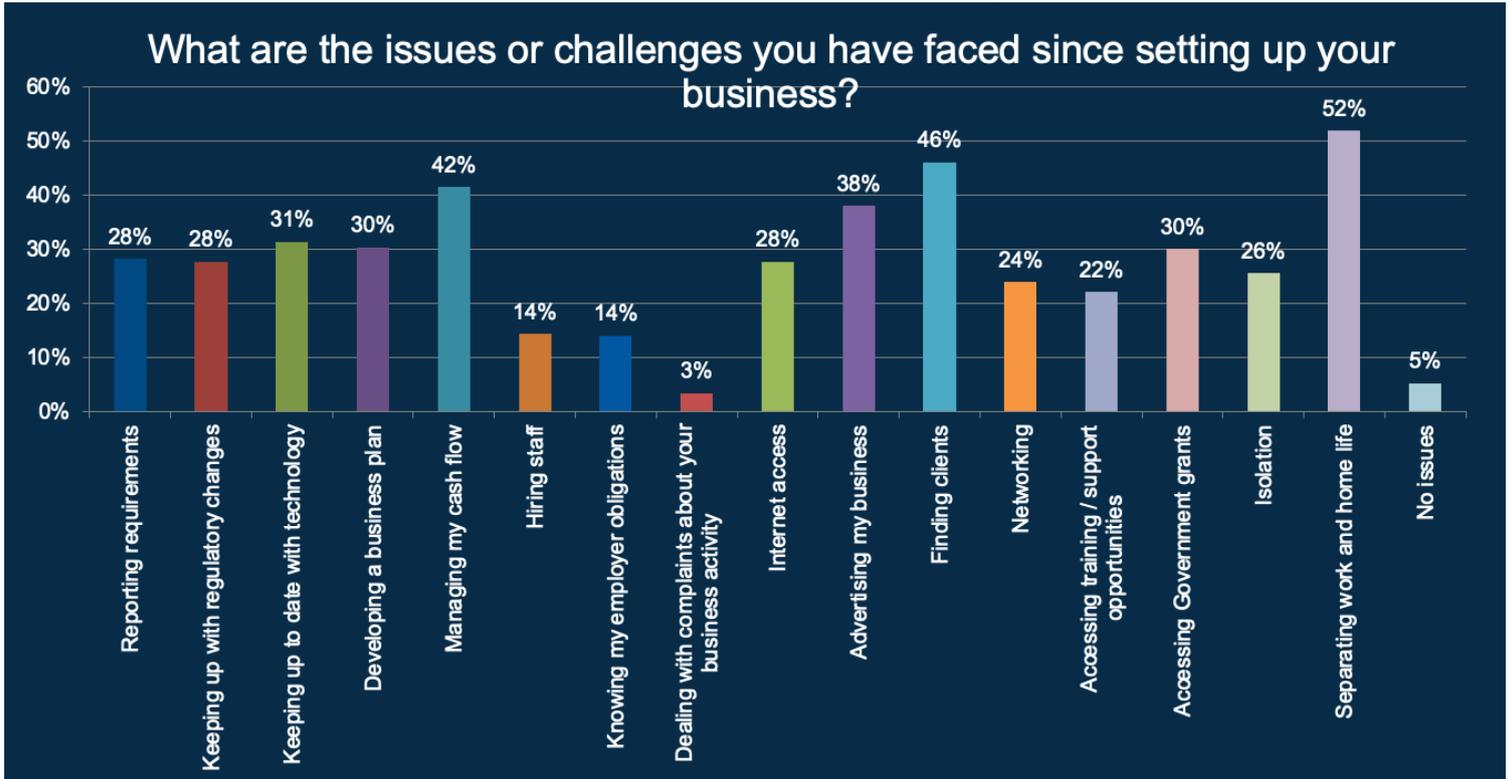
### 10.3 Attachment 2: Survey Responses

See attachment.

### 10.4 Attachment 3: Interview Objectives and Responses

See attachment.

### 10.5 Office of the Small Business Commissioner Survey 1



### 10.6 Office of the Small Business Commissioner Survey 2

