New businesses boost CBD

By KONNOR FURBER

NEW businesses have opened their doors in the main street of Mareeba, bringing a renewed energy to the town's shopping precinct.

The new additions are a breath of fresh air for the main drag, which was beginning to look a bit dismal following the closing of Rivers and Rockmans earlier in the year.

Byrnes Street now looks livelier with the Anytime Fitness gym that officially opened last week; the Uzbek-Turkish restaurant Shish; Mish & Moo, a quirky store selling the products of over 30 local businesses; and the soon-arriving clothing store, Whiskey and Wildflowers.

The former ANZ bank building has also been renovated and leased, with Regional Insurance Brokers moving from their old office near the Gateway Hotel to the upgraded premises.

Just down the road, the large building that was home to the former pet store has been under renovation for a number of months now and locals are eagerly awaiting its arrival, speculating on what type of shops might fill the space.

It is understood it is being developed into a complex that will host multiple businesses and is expected to be opened by the end of the month.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce president Joe Moro was "very happy" to see new businesses rolling into town.

"There are a few interesting things happening which is a good turn around. I'm very happy that the street is starting to look lively again," he said.

"With every new business that opens, it will bring activity and more life into the Mareeba CBD, which is good.



Anytime Fitness Mareeba manager Makayla Spencer is looking forward to working at the new gym.

"It's important that people take advantage of these new businesses as soon as they can. We at the Chamber strongly believe in shopping locally as much as possible, because every dollar that is spent in the town is a dollar that will circulate throughout the town."

Mr Moro also mentioned that there could be more businesses "in the pipeline" that are looking to come to the Mareeba CBD.

Shish owner Farhod Baltabaev first came to Mareeba in 2010 to work on a banana farm, and after years of hard work he was able to follow his passion and open his very own restaurant.

He said he had received great support from the community since opening his business in mid-June.

"Business has been really good, we got a good response and the locals love it. It was a better response than I thought we'd get," he said.

"I've always had the passion to cook from a young age. I used to cook for my siblings when we were on our own, and then being on your own in a new country also makes you miss your own food, so I started cooking more.

"Down south you get a lot of different ethnic groups who open restaurants. I thought Mareeba needed something like that, so I wanted to give that."

The Anytime Fitness gym has now filled the empty space in the old RSL building. The franchise has nearly 600 fitness clubs across the country and is part of a global network of over 5,500 clubs.

Anytime Fitness franchisee Matt Parry, who owns the Mareeba gym, said they had received a lot of interest from the community.

"We own another gym in a small town just south of Sydney. It's got a similar population to here, it's a similar-sized gym, and it's been very popular down there, so we thought we'd replicate it up here," he said.

"We've got a lot of interest so far. It's actually been quite surprising. We had a couple of hundred people come and join which was a bit unexpected for a little regional town."

Additionally, the former Rockmans building will soon be vibrant once more, with Whiskey and Wildflowers looking to open their doors by mid-month.

Store owner Amanda Scikluna was bursting with excitement waiting for her store to open. She was very eager to add to the community's options when it comes to clothes shopping.



Shish owner Farhod Baltabaev showcasing some of his signature dishes.

"We sell men's, women, and children outdoor lifestyle clothing and accessories," she said.

"But we have pretty dresses as well, which is why I've got the whiskey and the wildflowers.

"Your whiskey is like your grit – so your campers, fishers, and the agricultural industry – and the wildflowers is for the girls looking for a pretty dress to wear or your everyday clothing as well."



The former pet store building is being renovated into a complex that will host multiple businesses.



New store Mish & Moo has brought a bit of vibrance to Byrnes Street.

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