

The Outer West of Sydney: The 'mall' of historical streetscapes.

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Coffee on the old High Street Penrith, May 2015, Google Maps

The 'anchor based wave' of regional shopping centres across the Sydney metro and their 'mall' of historical streetscapes is old news however there is life left in the old high street in some cases.

The scene is familiar, the regional town or centre with its historical streetscape deadened by the implanting of almost whole 'commoditised townships' in the form of regional shopping centres that sit incongruously in one part of the town. Such developments work on what are called 'anchor tenants' such as large supermarket chains who are willing to 'anchor' the development providing the main retail visitation magnet around which the other shops cluster. The wave of these anchor developments is a well known phenomenon across Australia and the world.

The charming old high streets of such towns and centres then struggle to maintain relevance with sometimes large parts becoming dormant. The street either atrophies or survives obstinately with residual retail offerings that fill the gaps that the regional shopping centre has not provided for.

Depending on the economic and social horsepower and the historical development timeline of the town however, such streetscapes can become more than just a residual daytime offering. In the case of Townsville's Palmer street over decades it turned from a dormant port streetscape to a Dining Mecca (see article below). The key attributes of Palmer Street lay in its ability to provide a short and medium stay accommodation precinct with four-star tourist and business accommodation as well as a thriving night time food and entertainment precinct. There is much to be learned from this example and when considering the impact of regional shopping centres on regional centre across the western Sydney zone.

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