

Foodies hail smoke ban

By Matt Crossman

A trial smoking ban in Sunbury's foodie precinct has been hailed a tremendous success, with restaurateurs calling for a permanent ban ahead of statewide restrictions from late 2017.

The east side of O'Shanassy Street will stay smoke free between Station and Brook streets until at least April next year after Hume council passed a proposal put by Sunbury Community Health, Sunbury Business Association and traders.

District 3429 owner Ami Tran and Vic's Food and Wine's Vic Scerri said reaction to the trial ban, which started on April 4, had been

overwhelmingly positive, even though the ban had been largely self regulated.

"It means families, parents, old people ... they can actually enjoy their food without having to worry about smoke," Ms Tran said.

"Smokers, too, have been good about it, just going elsewhere to have a cigarette. It's been great for the area."

Mr Scerri said diners had quickly adjusted to the change. "There's no reason it shouldn't continue."

Council's city communities director, Margarita Caddick, said the trial ban was being monitored and evaluated.

"Hume officers regularly patrol the area and

we're pleased that people have done the right thing and refrained from smoking," she said.

"The trial is almost three months old, and no fines have been issued to date. Diners and local businesses have provided positive feedback.

"We think it's going very well."

A survey of more than 150 people last year found 88.5 per cent supported the trial ban.

In February, Cr Jack Medcraft said it could be the first step to a ban in other public places, such as carparks and shopping centres.

"We would cop flak over it from some people ... but the survey with the O'Shanassy Street proposal showed the community is saying, if you want to smoke, go to another spot."

Reaction to \$2.1 million of streetscape improvements unveiled last November also continues to be favourable.

Powerlines were put underground and kerbs and drainage upgraded. Wider paths have given traders more room for outdoor tables and chairs, while new council policies allow businesses to set up permanent structures.

But perhaps the most popular addition has been the fairy lights in the street's elm trees.

Ms Tran, Mr Scerri and council planning and development director Kelvin Walsh said the project had helped solidify O'Shanassy Street's growing reputation as a foodie destination and "a spectacular place to dine".