

Ashburton businesses upbeat on economy

By Sue Newman

Business confidence is on the rise in Ashburton.

A confidence poll undertaken by the Ashburton Business Association has resulted in an emphatic “yes” to the economy improving in 2010.

The association polled 162 of its members and received a 64% rate of return. Two questions were asked:

Are you confident that the economy will improve in 2010? Do you expect to have a better business year in 2010?

Executive officer Janine Sundberg said the results were convincing with very small numbers giving a negative response to either question.

Across the 105 respondents, all but four believe the economy will improve this year and just two do not expect they will have a better business year.

“We were delighted to get this level

of response and I think the numbers make it pretty effective. People talked about a relatively quiet start to the year, with many people giving priority to back to school spending, but they’re still confident things will pick up for them during the year,” Ms Sundberg said.

The businesses which responded came from all sectors of the local business community.

“A number of the responses were accompanied by comments, such as ‘Yes, we think we will have a better year in 2010 and we’ll be working hard to ensure we do.’

“Another said, ‘We have to be confident about the economy improving; if you’re negative, then that’s the result you’ll get.’” Ms Sundberg said.

The association is also confident about the year ahead.

This confidence is backed up by Grow Mid Canterbury chief executive

Rob Brawley who believes the tide has already begun to turn.

“I do think the year will be better, but this will vary from business to business. Things have been relatively challenging but already they’re improving and there’s no question there’s a lot more positivity around than there was at this time last year,” he said.

Last year the recession hit and jobs were lost, but this year, he anticipates employment will be kickstarted.

During the tough past 12 months, Mr Brawley said a pattern emerged in employment, with older more experienced workers retaining jobs, while young people had found it quite difficult to find jobs. Getting those young adults into work had become a major focus for the district, he said.

“Now we’re facing problems getting employers to take on young people. It’s pretty challenging in that area, pretty challenging changing attitudes.”