

MAY 2020 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We are coming out of the COVID shutdown but it will take many months to get back to normal – or at least the “new normal”. For those needing advice there are mentoring services available via the Cradle Coast Authority and don't forget Warren Moore at Braddon Business Centre and his colleague Fleur Bourke at Fusion Business Services in Ulverstone.

We had great news last week! The state government made available a \$100,000 grant fund to support regional chambers and business organisations around Tasmania. In conjunction with the Devonport Chamber of Commerce, Business Northwest submitted an application for the creation of an e-commerce platform for the region and jointly were awarded \$16.660.

The concept behind the grant funds was that they would be used to help businesses through the COVID-19 period and beyond. Our executive canvassed several concepts before deciding upon the e-commerce platform.

This online marketplace known as the Cradle Coast Online Market will provide businesses that have no current online selling capability with the ability to promote and sell their products online.

Additionally, those businesses that currently sell online will also be able to feature on the marketplace as we will have directory services to push traffic towards them.

The establishment of an online store and the initial setup will be free of charge for the next three months. Typically, this facility would cost from \$2-5,000 to establish plus significant expertise and ongoing monthly fees.

We are currently in the final stages of development and a prototype market was released to our internal testing team yesterday. Thanks to Justine McErlain, Cyndia Hilliger, Michael Cannon and our partner Jesse Creedon of Catch Fire Creative for their exceptional work so far. We are expecting to launch the online component by mid-June.

We will be opening it up to all types of businesses, obviously retail stores are prime candidates for an online market but also businesses that provide services can also take advantage of this fantastic offer. In the medium-term the directory services will be expanded to feature tourism and hospitality sites throughout the region so we can help get that part of the economy moving again too.

Business Northwest and Devonport Chamber of Commerce are strong supporters of the buy local campaign and we hope that by providing an online marketplace for local businesses that people will embrace this and buy more products from local suppliers all along the coast.

The website will be www.cradlecoastmarket.com so everyone needs to look out for that in about four weeks time - we got some great publicity in The Advocate this morning!

I was pleased to hear from Tuesday's City Council meeting that the majority of Councillors voted to support Councillor Dorsey's motion to provide one hour of free parking at the MSCP - for a minimum of one year. This initiative will provide great support to the businesses in the CBD area and actively encourage visitors from other centres to visit our city.

It is great to see such proactive support of local businesses by the Council. I realise this comes at a significant cost to the city but without a vibrant and successful CBD we cannot continue to attract new residents. We face significant challenges in resurrecting the local economy and this is another positive step in that process.

On Tuesday the state government announced the release of the Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Industry Development Funding Program. The \$50 million package of support measures, to be delivered over a period of up to 10 years will enable the establishment of a viable hydrogen production industry in Tasmania.

Burnie is a key site for hydrogen manufacture as we have a fantastic deep-water port for hydrogen export and will have ready access to cheap renewable energy via large wind farms in the region and the planned pumped hydro scheme.

The access to low priced, readily available clean energy from wind, hydro or hydrogen is a very strong attractor to manufacturers, so should lead to relocations of mainland companies to Tasmania much as occurred decades ago due to cheap hydro energy bringing companies like APPM and Tioxide here.

Estimates are of up to 1200 jobs so I certainly hope that proponents select our city for this exciting development.

Until next month.....



Ian Jones

President

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