

August 14th, 2020

2019 / 2020 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What an amazingly complex year we have endured.

The arrival of COVID-19 had an immediate impact on BNW and our members. We were kept busy trying to keep members and local businesses up to date with rules and regulation plus government funding opportunities. Many were overcome with the realisation that they could lose their business or suffer extreme financial hardship. We were able to help several get through the maze of grants to secure funding and protect their investment. The announcement of JobKeeper was well received and has saved many businesses.

Our year stated well with the filming of the subjects for *Project Hercules*. All six videos were completed and delivered to the Dept of State Growth and remaining grant funds received in December. Unfortunately, due to COVID we were forced to cancel our release event and are holding back on that until we can have new families resettle in Tasmania.

Last August we commenced training courses for our Regional Employment Trial (RET) named *Helping Burnie Work* (HBW). This was funded by a federal government grant of around \$58,000. We completed two of the six-week courses then had a change of trainer as Kirk Pinner relocated to Hobart – thanks to Kirk for the excellent effort he provided. Ken Dorsey of *Workforce Development* took over in February to provide the third of four planned courses but had to conclude two days early (but complete) as the government implemented its COVID shutdown. Eight unemployed people completed the course and were awarded Certificate III in Business.

Of the 23 that have completed the three courses I know of five that secured full time work. Recently we were advised that the program end date will be extended by one year and we can restart when face to face training is allowed by the department. We hope to complete the remaining course before the end of the year.

In November we hosted the *7BU/SeaFM Excellence in Service* awards at the BAFC. It was our first time to host the event and we had around 100 attend. Voting was done via physical ballots cast at several locations around the city with Young's Vegie Shed being named as the Gold Award winner. Kevin and Sue Young were inducted into the Retail Hall of Fame and Sargent's Rural Supplies was the initial inductee to the City of Makers Hall of Fame.

The 2020 event has been cancelled due to COVID but we look forward to making it bigger and better in 2021.

One of the highlights of our year was the further development of our relationship with Burnie City Council. In December Council voted to partner with BNW for the conducting of promotions for the city. This agreement is over four years and involves funds of \$40,000pa and the use of 0.4FTE (full time employee) to assist in delivering these promotions. We commenced activities with a Sidewalk Sale event in February when a large cruise ship had berthed, which helped make the event successful despite an unseasonal downpour.

Subsequent promotions were in planning when COVID-19 hit and forced us to suspend activities. During the following few months our minds turned to recovery and Council allocated an additional \$125K to COVID support for local businesses including \$85K for promotions. We have created a marketing and advertising campaign to relaunch Burnie, to both intrastate and interstate and launch is dependent upon when borders re-open. We are working with Council to finalise the campaigns for launch into the Hobart and Launceston markets around October. My thanks to Justin McErlain and Cyndia Hilliger for their inspirational work on the creation of the campaigns.

Recently Andrew Wardlaw left the Council. It was a sad day for us as Andrew played a pivotal role in developing the strong relationship that exists between the two organisations. He attended most of our monthly meetings and breakfast sessions and we can only hope his replacement will be as engaged as Andrew was. We wish him well for the future.

Our breakfast sessions continued to enjoy success and are the envy of many organisations in the state. We had an interesting mix of industry, community and political presenters and averaged 23 attendees. COVID forced us to cancel the activity for a few months but they are now back in operation and very well attended.

Thank you to our Executive Committee members for their support during the year, especially our Vice Presidents Justin McErlain and Kial Hingston. It has been a very busy time, especially the last six months of the year.

Thanks also to our sponsors who have stuck with us through the recent tough times. Their support is certainly appreciated, and I urge everyone to support them to help reward them for their sponsorship.

As we emerge (fingers crossed) from the COVID era I look forward to another exciting year for Business Northwest.

Best wishes

