

Annual report for 2021-22

The first few months of our year continued to be dominated by COVID with check-in requirements being enforced – meanwhile Melbourne became the lockdown city of the world, which had a severe impact on supply chains as much of Victoria’s manufacturing was shut down for prolonged periods.

Many businesses flourished after the support of JobKeeper - our friends in tourism and hospitality seemed to suffer most and are still having issues with securing staff, many of whom seem to have vanished into thin air - our unemployment rate is the lowest in 40 years but many businesses can’t find staff. Twelve months on COVID still persists and is impacting staffing levels in many businesses.

Workforce constraints will continue to be a long-term issue as we have major infrastructure projects (renewable energy and mining) that will need thousands for construction and operation and we will be forced to use FIFO workers. Housing is also a long-term problem as we don’t have sufficient resources to house the workforce or to build the required housing (which is becoming increasingly expensive).

In the second half of the year inflation took off, as did increases in the Reserve Bank cash rate, vegetable prices and coupled with the impact of the Ukraine war fuel prices spiralled further driving inflation higher. As interest rates rise consumers and businesses face higher costs of mortgages/loans which will see many under financial strain well into 2023. The new government has to fight fires that are burning on many fronts.

During the year we got involved with the state government’s decision to relocate the court house into the former UTAS buildings at Mooreville Road. The decision was a short-sighted one made by Hobart based beauracrats without any community consultation and we were successful in getting the decision re-opened and an EOI issued for alternate sites within the CBD is currently being pursued. I hope common sense prevails and we keep this important building in our downtown area.

We continue to obtain grant funds across several areas with income over \$600,000. The Table Cape Lightshow (\$403,00) being the largest spans two years, but many other chambers are envious of our ability to secure such funding. We have been able to do our *Whispering Trees, Living History, Helping Burnie Work, Renew Burnie* and other projects with this funding – none of which would be possible with just our normal revenue.

The Council funded Renew Burnie project continued to deliver results with empty shops in two arcades hosting several social enterprises and two shops attracting full rent paying tenants.

Stemming from our *Renew Burnie* project we worked with Burnie Council to create *intersection*, a pop-up art gallery in the former Dick Smith shop in Wilmot St. We had great cooperation with managing agent Knight Frank and in March opened a spectacular new gallery featuring The National Portrait Gallery which was secured by *Ten Days on the Island* – around 2000 attended over the three weeks. Following this we had a display of colourful works by local artist Michael Muruste and to close out our “season” we had works from two UTAS Phd students – overall a very successful three months. Council will use *intersection* on a casual basis into the cruise ship and holiday seasons.

May was a busy month with the ALP winning back government after a long time in Opposition. We presented our *Burnie 2.0* program to the Governor, Her Excellency Barbara Baker who was very impressed with the work we have done and our plans for the future. Late in the month we hosted the annual State Budget Roadshow with around 80 guests attending to hear Treasurer Michael Ferguson present the 2022/23 budget. Premier Jeremy Rockliff also attended, and both were very complimentary of the event. We extend our thanks to Peter Gutwein for his service to the state over a long period.

It is pleasing that BNW is sought out for consultation by many differing organisations – from state and federal MPs (both Liberal and Labor parties), RDA, State Growth and other departments plus media. We have membership or advisory roles in tourism and several workforce development groups and our *Helping Burnie Work* program has been lauded for bringing long term unemployed back into work.

I thank the members of our Executive group for their time and assistance this year. Kial Hingston resigned as Treasurer due to relocation and thankfully Ant Dry stepped into the role.

Now in their seventh year Breakfast Networking Sessions continue to be very popular with an average attendance of 28 (22% up on last year). Late in the year we had to relocate the event to the Beach Hotel and the staff there have made us very welcome. I thank all those that presented (too many to mention) and members and guests that attended. The livestreaming of this event is growing in popularity with some events getting over 200 offline views.

Our financial loss this last year is primarily due to timing of the conclusion of some projects which meant revenue slipped into the following year. Overall, our financial position is strong; our asset base has grown substantially via grant funds and we will be creating an asset register in Xero as per an audit recommendation.

Our partnership with Burnie Council continues to provide quality assets and the penguin centre is becoming quite well known via the YouTube stream from five active burrows – we have had some great compliments from other centres around Australia and have plans to improve the daylight offering of the centre. We have had a strong focus on the Rhododendron Gardens as we feel it is an iconic attraction and has great potential. The installation of cameras and livestreaming (literally) of platypus was step one and the installation of *Whispering Trees* is the second project we delivered in the last year.

We provided some impetus to brighten up the CBD with our Tasmanian Tigers on the Plaza Shopping Centre and the Robot Tea Party enhancing a blank rust-stained wall on North Terrace. More are planned but the required bureaucracy makes it difficult. We hosted a street party/market for Christmas culminating in lighting the Community Tree – over 600 attended an enjoyable evening. Thanks to Cyndia Hilliger for an immense amount of work to make these projects such a success.

Our Table Cape project progresses but has changed a lot due to overbearing bureaucracy by PWS. The plan to project onto the lighthouse continues and we have engaged *Ten Days on the Island* to create the show. Justin and Cyndia have done a power of work on this and instead of an interpretive centre on Table Cape there will be a high-tech display at Wonders of Wynyard going live late in 2022.

I sincerely thank our sponsors – without them we would not be able to function effectively and provide the services to the membership that we do.

In conclusion, I wish the incoming Executive all the best for another prosperous year.



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