



December 19th, 2022

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – December 2022

What an eventful year we have experienced! We have had leadership changes – a new Prime Minister, a new Premier and new Mayors in place to cap off a turbulent year shaped by COVID and the war in Ukraine. Covid seems to be more under control than this time last year, but the war drags on.

The impact of these has seen inflation take off and interest rates increasing to their highest rates in ten years putting pressure onto businesses with borrowings and causing customers to rein in some discretionary spending; and I believe this will continue well into 2023. Fortunately, the price of oil has dropped, and our dollar has regained ground from two months ago (as it was touching 62¢) so the cost of freight should stabilise; and as China reopens supply chains can get back to normal operation during 2023.

Cruise ships are back and having an impact on Burnie as we have thousands of tourists roaming the streets enjoying shopping and looking around the city. Weather has not been kind to several ships with one unable to dock. The new cruise passenger facility in Civic Plaza has been very successful and the dual sided information kiosk has been a real hit with over 10,000 downloads of the *Discover Burnie eGuide*. This was an initiative of Business Northwest and I congratulate Justin McErlain on the great work he did to get this operational.

It was great that the Burnie Council accepted our initiatives and are trialling the introduction of free parking in the MSCP on Saturdays to encourage more people to come into the CBD over the Christmas/New Year period. Additionally, the "holiday" on outdoor dining fees should make the city a lot more vibrant as locals and visitors can enjoy our summer weather and more social interaction - I encourage all our hospitality members to get permit applications in as soon as practical to take advantage of this.

The most impactful local event was undoubtedly the flood damage to the Cam River Bridge. This created absolute havoc to businesses and residents for a two-week period. We have been advocating for a second crossing of the Cam for at least the ten years I have been here – the announcement of a replacement bridge two years ago was disappointing as it addressed the issue of aging infrastructure but failed to meet our requirements for disaster planning. The government has now assured us it will progress on the feasibility of providing a second crossing.

Late in the year life member John Pease OAM passed away. John was an enormously valuable member who was our longest serving President (11 years) and hardly ever missed a meeting. I relied on him for guidance many times and his experience and support meant a lot to me. He will certainly be missed.

Our Breakfast Networking Sessions continue to be popular and despite COVID causing some disruptions we finished the year strongly. Our new venue, The Beach

Hotel has been well received and we thank Head Chef Brennen and his team for accommodating us.

Our *Renew Burnie* project has been very successful and the vast majority of the empty shops in *Plaza Arcade* and *City Square* are now occupied making a walk-through town much more pleasant than when we started this three years ago. Our thanks to Burnie City Council for their ongoing support.

Another highlight for 2022 was the opening of the *intersection* art space in the old Dick Smith shop in Columnar Court. The repurposing of a tired old retail space onto a contemporary art gallery hosting national and local exhibitions has really added a lot to the vibrancy of the city and is well appreciated by local and cruise ship visitors.

Our Table Cape project is drawing to a close (albeit late due to bureaucratic interference). The light projection to be displayed onto the lighthouse has been completed and looks great. The Virtual Reality "glass elevator" and interactive displays that were planned for location at the Cape are destined to be installed at *Wonders of Wynyard* and will feature display technology never seen before in Australia – it will be ground-breaking! Well done to Justin and Cyndia for outstanding work on this difficult project.

I hope you can join us at the meeting this Wednesday December 21st and stay on for Christmas drinks and some finger food with other members to celebrate another great year for our organisation. Please RSVP so we can organise catering.

For those of you who can't join us I wish you all the best over the holiday season and thank you for your support in 2022.

Best regards



Ian Jones – President

