

## Annual Report 2023-24

A good year for Business Northwest albeit a tough one financially for many of our members and local small businesses. Interest rates remained high all year after reaching 4.35% in November and this has severely affected consumers and their disposable income – hospitality has been hit especially hard.

We worked closely with Burnie City Council on its plans for *Making a Better Burnie 2044* strategy, *Burnie Settlement Strategy* and the *City Centre Urban Plan*; participating on committees to provide input plus hosting breakfasts to explain the processes and solicit feedback. I feel the city has now got a very solid footing to move forward to future prosperity. Unfortunately, General Manager Simon Overland is departing in November; we thank him for the service he has provided and for the stable platform he has created. The state has provided \$17.3m for the Council to commence work on refreshing the CBD.



Our breakfast sessions were again popular although numbers dropped late in the year. We held 16 events, and the highlights were breakfasts featuring the Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles and the Minister for Communications Michelle Rowlands. A lunch featuring Premier Jeremy Rockliff in November also was very popular.

Our advocacy activities reached new heights with meetings with state and federal ministers including Chris Bowen, Andrew Lee, Julie Collins and Nick Duigan plus regular radio, TV and press interviews. My election to the Board of TCCI in 2022 has given me excellent visibility of larger issues facing businesses so I can better assist our local operators.



In late 2023 I was appointed as the inaugural Chair of Clean Energy Tasmania, the peak body representing major renewable energy (RE) proponents. This is an important position as much of the activity in renewables will be in our region and Burnie will be a hub for RE with Marinus, Robbins, HIF and Ark Energy close by.

During the year we farewelled Richard Ruddle who was a valued member and former executive of the chamber. He passed away in July aged 84. Richard was our Public Officer and of great service to our group for many years. He provided solid counsel to me on many matters and could be relied upon to reconstruct events as he was a prolific notetaker.



Our *Sensing Table Cape* project completed early in the year - it was a resounding success with good crowds attracted to the lightshow on Table Cape lighthouse. Our Virtual Reality (VR) partnership with UTAS yielded two projects that we have been able to deploy to other locations during the year. This partnership also led to receiving a \$50K grant to develop a feasibility study for the use of VR technology for training in the renewables industry. After the successful feasibility study, we want to extend this partnership to develop a centre of excellence for VR training in the RE industry using local resources.

The state was beleaguered with political turmoil for months last year until Premier Rockliff went to the polls in May. The end result was a larger parliament operating under a minority Liberal government. One can only hope it runs close to full term.



We are facing a federal election early in 2025, but the field has opened up for the Braddon electorate with incumbent Gavin Pearce electing not to nominate. Gavin will be sorely missed as he is a great local member and has done much for the region since being elected in 2019.

The 23/24 cruise ship season was quite successful after the lean years of COVID with several visits by the *Virgin Resilient Lady* being a highlight. Unfortunately, the next cruise season will deliver less than half the passengers as several cruise lines have withdrawn from the Australian market. This will have a big impact on Burnie.



Financially we had a stable year but are looking to ensure future financial sustainability. Ignoring a one-off accounting adjustment, we made a profit of \$8,344.

We held a strategic planning session recently and are close to finalising our strategic plan. Initial intentions are to:

- redevelop our ticketing platform to become a commercial product
- commercialise AV assets to become a revenue generator
- build revenue to fund a full time CEO role
- improve member engagement and retention
- conduct industry specific events
- maintain our influence in urban planning and infrastructure advocacy

I thank the members of our Executive group for their time and assistance this year especially Secretary Justin McErlain and Treasurer Ant Dry. Members of the executive have engaged strongly this year, and I feel we have the most capable team in many years with a wide variety of skills and attributes.

I thank our sponsors who help “keep the lights on” - please support them as they support us.

In conclusion, I thank our members for their support and wish the incoming Executive all the best for another prosperous year.

**Ian Jones**  
**PRESIDENT**

**PLATINUM MEMBERS:**



**GOLD MEMBERS:**



**SILVER MEMBERS:**



**BRONZE MEMBERS:**

