

February 18th, 2019

## **President's Notes – February 2019**

There has been so much happening in recent weeks in Tasmania; and especially in our region.

Firstly, the fires across Tasmania and specifically the Circular Head and West Coast areas. Many thanks to the “firies” and especially the brave volunteers that assisted in them – also thanks to employers who gave the volunteers time off to help the communities in those areas.

Fortunately, we had no loss of life; mainly thanks to the great work done by our emergency services personnel. In places the terrain was so inhospitable the crews just couldn't get to the fire fronts and had to rely on the water bombers to try and halt the progress.

In recent days the national spotlight was on the Burnie area with the PM, Scott Morrison spending time in the area to announce a regional forestry hub pilot program to which he has committed \$12.5 million. The next day he was “pumping the flesh” at the naming ceremony for the new ship, Tasmanian Achiever II - a real strengthening of Toll's investment in the Bass Strait trade. Monday saw the maiden visit of the Cunard liner Queen Elizabeth II to the Burnie port. What a magnificent vessel she is – and we will see her again next month on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

This week's General Meeting (Wednesday night at 6pm) includes the official presentation of the Burnie Citizen of the Year award to our very own life member John Packham – the award will occur at the conclusion of the meeting and everyone is welcome to attend – Well done John!!!

We were fortunate enough to have former BCCI Executive member Phil McCulloch from the Cancer Council address us on their progress and urge us to participate in the Relay for Life event to be held in Penguin March 16-17th. Workplace teams are urged to enter for the 20-hour team walk to raise funds for the Cancer Council to continue its good work in spreading awareness of this terrible disease.

Next week the breakfast series switches to an economic vein with well-known business management consultant Warren Moore presenting “*Burnie - Going Forward*”. This report was commissioned by the Burnie City Council and has recently been presented to the Councillors. Warren will present the status and potential of the Burnie business environment. Having spent many years consulting to businesses in the region I am sure Warren will be “right on the money” as usual.

Two weeks later Daryl Connelly, CEO of the Cradle Coast Authority will present the “*The Cradle Coast Regional Futures Plan – a New Approach to Economic Development*”.

And two weeks after that newly appointed Office of the Coordinator General local representative Jackie Harvey will be speaking to us regarding major projects for the region – both those announced and hopefully others in the pipeline.

I urge members to support the breakfast sessions as they take a lot to organise and offer a great opportunity to hear a range of interesting presentations before the general business public hear of them; and have the chance to ask questions regarding the subject matter. The networking opportunities the breakfasts provide are also valuable and members are asked to try and bring a guest or two along to see the Chamber in action. Our strong program is the envy of many other Chambers in the state and the better supported it is by members the higher profile the speakers have (and will) become.

May will see us meeting with politicians of the major parties to discuss what businesses in the NW region want to see from future governments. The wish list includes the second Bass Strait interconnector, extension and upgrading of the Freight Equalisation Scheme and the development of the walkover from Burnie Port into the CBD. We will also be hosting a public election forum; details will be announced when *Scomo* gives us the election date.

Progress on *Project Hercules* (our videographies of local identities who have moved here from interstate) is progressing well with three subjects completed and in the editing process. After discussions with the Department of State Growth we have changed our plan from including print biographies to increasing the number of videographies, so we do not cross over on work already done (specifically the Make it Tasmania Program) and further complement that work.

Two weeks ago, we met with a representative from the Regional Development Authority and are pursuing a grant to provide employability training to young unemployed people in the area under the Regional Employment Trials program. This exercise is similar to our recent unsuccessful proposal to Dept of State Growth, but we believe we have a greater chance as RDA is much more directly involved and consultative in the tendering process.

Early March we will be engaging with AusIndustry to attend its *Support for Business* night to hear how it can provide businesses with access and awareness of available support with the many programs available from both state and federal governments.

I think the future is bright for our region; we have many major infrastructure projects in energy, forestry and mining plus our growing agribusiness industry that will all provide employment opportunities and keep our economy ticking over for decades to come.

However, the next few weeks/months will be very interesting on a national and international level as Australian politics continues to entertain (plus elections always slow down our economy) and the drama of the US/China trade relationship will unfold; potentially triggering a trade war – maybe Australia can benefit from that at the expense of our American friends as our products will be more competitive entering China. BUT... there is almost \$100 Billion in unfinished apartment projects in the nation (mostly Sydney and Melbourne); Chinese property investment has slumped and housing loan approvals have declined – batten down the hatches for a rough ride this year!

best regards

Ian Jones - **President**

