

September 14th, 2020

SEPTEMBER 2020 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We seem to be getting back to a "new normal" in the post COVID era. Many businesses are back to pre-pandemic revenue levels and based on research by myself in Burnie and Stacey Sheehan in Devonport between 75-90% of local small businesses will drop off the revised JobKeeper. Whilst there will be some exceptions it seems that retail, manufacturing, mining and agriculture are back to normal, but tourism and hospitality are still struggling. The state government's voucher system will provide a short term "sugar hit" but there is a need for sustained financial support other wise we will lose some of these operators - we have already had one good restaurant close in Burnie; we don't want any more.

You may remember me writing of our Regional Employment Training program whereby we conducted training courses for long term unemployed people focussing (on older people). I went to the award-winning Hillcrest Newsagency on Sunday morning to get my newspaper and bumped into Phil. He was on our first course back in October last year. A 62yo man who had been in and out of work for years, very low on self-esteem and lacking interview skills. Phil secured a job whilst on the course and credits us with restoring his confidence and teaching him how to perform better in an interview. Eleven months later Phil is still in that job and drives a company ute. That was a great start to my day!

Our breakfast series continues to provide good entertainment. Last week we had Lyndal Thorne talking to us on the DesignEye Creative Paper on Skin movie - some of the creations can only be described as magnificent. We have taken over a vacant shop in the Plaza Arcade and are showcasing three Paper on Skin pieces. These are from the US and did not arrive in time for the competition judging. Our aim is to bring more artwork and local history to the general public so will feature different displays there in coming months.

Next week's breakfast features the CEO of TasPorts, Anthony Donald speaking on the Burnie Port plan. Our deep-water port is one of the main reasons our city exists. TasPorts had major plans for the development of the port so I expect a strong attendance for this one.

We had our AGM last month and I thank the members for supporting myself and our Executive and re-electing us to our positions. Our team is Justin McErlain (VP/Secretary), Kial Hingston (VP/Treasurer), Michael Cannon, Nick Higgins, Bec Luck and Trent Aitken. The support I received from the Executive last year was fantastic and I look forward to another year of achievements. After a few years of losses, we had a very profitable year and will strive to replicate it.

Burnie has quite a lot of empty retail spaces in the CBD area. We are working on a *Renew Burnie* program which involves recruiting social enterprises to occupy vacant shops on a rolling 30-day rental plan where they get free rent but pay for utilities.

This can create opportunities for creative and start-up businesses, not for profits and social enterprises to trial an idea with little to no overhead. This has been highly successful in Newcastle, Geelong, Adelaide and Wollongong. We hope this will enliven the Plaza Arcade and City Square in our main shopping block. Over the next two weeks shop 8 in the Plaza Arcade will become the HQ for the project and myself and others on the *Renew Burnie* team will be spending time there on a regular basis, so please drop in and say hello if you are passing by.

We are working on several other initiatives in relation to improving our city, bringing more tourists here and keeping them here for at least an overnight stay. Our presentations to Council have been very well received and we will work through the plan for execution with Council staff in the next few weeks. Stay tuned!!

I wish you a busy and productive (& profitable) month.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian".

Ian Jones

President

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