



Commerce Ballarat

Your partner in business

Chair AGM Report 2024

This AGM marks my first 12 months as Chair of Commerce Ballarat, preceded by my role as Deputy Chair to Hayley Coates. I certainly had big shoes to fill and one thing I can say for certain is that there is always plenty going on and no one ever stands still in this organisation!

It has never been more important to have an advocacy led organisation supporting all local businesses and I feel very privileged to be a part of one of the strongest groups of its kind in Victoria. The organisation continues to grow, to fight and to lead - ensuring that there are new memberships, new programs and strengthened partnerships and that everyone can feel supported, heard and seen. The addition of the Grower's and Producers Hub this year and the growth not only in numbers, but also in engagement and support of these very important members of our region is a credit to the office team and their hard work and belief in buying and supporting local.

I would like to thank my current board members for the commitment that they have shown over the past 12 months in stepping up and supporting Commerce Ballarat and all our members. Although new to the role as Chair, I am aware that the job requires an engaged and supportive board and the different skills that each bring are vital to the success and continued growth of the organisation.

To my Deputy, Neville Ivey and Treasurer, Ewen Fletcher, thank you once again for the support you offer to not only me, but to the CEO and staff. You are both incredibly giving of your time, and I know it is not always easy, but you are both always very willing.

I would also like to thank Ewen Fletcher for his contribution. Ewen will be stepping off the board in the coming months. Ewen's knowledge and insight have been invaluable, and we will certainly miss his commitment and enthusiasm.

We have five board positions available at the AGM this year and once again, worthy applicants with varied skills and knowledge. I am excited to see the new ideas and different perspectives that these changes will bring as the board regenerates with new members.

At an operational level there have been some changes again this year, however the transitions seem to have not missed a beat. The new members of the team are amazing examples of the talented youth we have in our region and adding to the knowledge and experience of the existing team members they are a formidable team. We are fortunate that we have such passionate employees and their enthusiasm for what they do is inspiring. The team continues to be led and educated by our CEO, Jodie Gillett who once again has provided daily inspiration and mentoring to these incredible staff. I know that Jodie will tell you that everything is a team effort, but there is no doubt the experience of her right-hand Zoe returning



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from maternity leave, has provided great support (and some relief) to both Jodie and the new staff. Thank you, Jodie, Zoe, and the entire office team. We as a board continue to be amazed at how much you all fit into your day!

Unfortunately, we continue to operate in extremely challenging times for business and the next 12 months look to continue that trend. We have always been fortunate in Ballarat to have a business community who tries to look for the positives and looks for opportunities to work collaboratively to benefit our region. It seems to be getting harder and harder to stay positive and there is no doubt that challenges remain, and there will be new issues to navigate over the coming months.

I am proud however to work with an organisation that believes in the strength of community and B2B support. I know that this will allow Ballarat businesses to continue to fight, knowing that we are supporting them, and most importantly standing with them. Commerce Ballarat will continue to work with the City of Ballarat and Committee for Ballarat, to advocate for business and infrastructure that can provide benefits for our members and the entire Ballarat community.

Finally, thank you to our members. The organisation only exists because of you and for you. We will continue to look for ways to not only support but also to value add. Last year we spread the message "Get comfortable being uncomfortable" and it seems that this will be an ongoing message for the year to come as well! Commerce Ballarat continues to evolve, and we always welcome feedback from members and the community. It is important that we reinvent, advocate and remain relevant. Thank you for your support of us, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure Ballarat is a prosperous and successful place.

Anne Alexander

Chair, Commerce Ballarat