



CommerceBallarat

Supporting business across the region

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

9th April 2025

With only 10-weeks into my tenure as *Chair of Commerce Ballarat* I feel almost like an imposter in reviewing and assessing the past 12-months. However, the journey thus far has strengthened my commitment to the role and the passion together with the Board, CEO and the Commerce team to confront the opportunities and challenges ahead.

A huge thank you to past chair Anne Alexander for her commitment and guidance during her period of involvement with the Commerce Board, her valued understanding and vision, particularly in the hospitality sector will be missed.

Also a massive acknowledgement to past Treasurer Ewan Fletcher for his dedication and professionalism in navigating Commerce through a challenging financial environment. Ewan's input and commitment to the Board has been without peer, thank you.

The importance of our collective ability to provide guidance, collaboration, networking and connections through our activities and events during 2024 was never more relevant. To the immense credit of the Commerce team, led by our CEO, Jodie Gillett we continued to support business and industry through our regular activities, programs and functions including B2B during November & December, monthly Biznet breakfasts, industry tours, mentoring opportunities, the B31 Business Festival during August, Business Day Out in May and the Business Excellence Awards culminating in a Gala Dinner during August.

With Jodie as Chair, we continue to provide an active role in the Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance, collectively with other regional chambers Victorian assisting in the promotion of regional business and industry.

The Ballarat Tradie Network commenced during 2024 and continues to gain momentum. The initiation provides significant benefit to the industry via the opportunity to network, provide connections and facilitate much needed collaborative discussion. We will continue to strengthen and grow this important initiative during 2025.

The re-launch of our emerging talent engagement initiative through Next Gen Collective provides a much-needed opportunity for our young and potential future business leaders. The team together with our 'younger' Board members will continue to develop and deliver new and creative opportunities for this group to connect and network throughout 2025.

My experiences in the position to date have solidified the importance our organization has in connecting with and advocating for our members. I am eager to continue to build and enhance the unique opportunities Commerce are afforded to meet and discuss current and future issues with the Federal, State and Local Government in the best interest of our members.

The Forage and Feast festival launch in November reinforced our commitment to the Central Highlands Growers and Producers Hub. The festival facilitated not only the connection between farmers and growers but with the consumers; showcasing the diverse, sustainable and resilient food system we offer in our region.

Through our involvement in the implementation of the Central Highlands Drought Resilience Plan, which is co-funded by the Commonwealth Government's Future Drought Fund and the Victorian Government, we have a unique opportunity to further collaborate and strengthen the core values of our farmers and producers.

The Westpac Board visited Ballarat in January this year, their first foray into a Victorian regional city. We were fortunate to join a selected group of other regional Council, business and chamber representatives to discuss the current regional economy, business conditions and the short-term fiscal projections.

The launch of the 2025 Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards in March further enhanced a key pillar of the Commerce agenda; to showcase, celebrate and support Ballarat business and industry. Whilst the awards offer an exceptional opportunity for individual businesses, the culmination of the Gala Dinner during the B31 August Business Festival provides the ultimate opportunity for the Ballarat and surrounding region business community to come together and celebrate success together.

During March, Commerce delivered a formal submission to the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry into the supply of homes in regional Victoria. The submission was prepared through Board discussion and collaboration with the Commerce team, delivering an outcome supported by the Board and CEO. The process and outcome provided a future format and base for Commerce to actively discuss and formally respond to key policies and important issues that are relevant to our members

Also, during March, we attended the Committee for Ballarat Vision 2050 presentation workshop and continued our highly credited industry Education tour and panel discussion with our industry partner HLEN and the Education Department.

The energy of our CEO and the dedicated staff provide a unique platform that together with the Board we can drive continued support, promotion and advocacy for our members through 2025. Led by Jodie, the team at the coal-face having a diverse mix of experience (over 10-years) and youth, combined with their passion and exuberance will continue to deliver quality outcomes for our members in 2025.

During 2025 the Board as a collective will look at opportunities to grow and expand connections and proactively support business. As a Board a key focus will be to become more active within the business community and to effectively advocate for our members at every opportunity.

A further key pillar of the Commerce agenda will be to enhance our relationships with the City of Ballarat and other key industry participants to ensure cohesive and effective campaigns, workshops, networking and development opportunities are provided to support our members.

I am enthusiastic and inspired about the journey and the positive impact the Commerce team in conjunction with an effective Board can have on our members and more globally Ballarat and the surrounding region during 2025.



Board Chair - Commerce Ballarat