

Presidents Report September 2021

Thursday 16 September 2021

The Greater Southern Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce. Inc. AGM

Currumbin RSL

Hilary Jacobs – President

Greater Southern Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce

Good morning ladies and gentlemen

****This time** last year the chamber had 106 members and had around \$55,000 in funds. This year our membership base remains at around the same position and our asset base is now sitting at around \$64,000. Our Treasurer John Forrester will have more details on our financial status in his report.

During the last 12 months we have increased the number of Gold Members to a total of 19, we have six Silver members, and 13 bronze members. We now have 61 general members and four lifetime members. Without the support of all our members and the volunteering of our committee and executive the GSGC Chamber wouldn't exist. So thank you to everyone here for your ongoing and continuing support.

****At our last** AGM the executive was confirmed as our two Vice Presidents being Jo-Ann Smith and Chris Ward, Secretary Mike Remmer, John Forrester was appointed as Treasurer and I was returned as President. The Executive has been ably supported for the last twelve months by our management board members; Joan Farmer, Josh Martin, Michael Kelly, John Mitchell, Anne Stovin, Daragh Murphy and Josh Yates. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the executive and management board for their support and efforts during the past 12 months. During the year our two VP's resigned. Chris Ward has now relocated to North QLD and Jo Ann Smith is dealing with personal issues. I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge their work for the chamber over previous years and to wish them well on behalf of the remaining board and the wider Chamber community.

**** Since this** meeting last year we have held more events, depending on the varying controls in place to deal with COVID 19.

Following our AGM in September we had a breakfast in October to Meet the Candidates for the State Election. We saw most of the candidates for the electorates of Currumbin and Burleigh present their cases for election and answer questions about their political positions. The result was a great morning and we kept to timetable, which we were told would be near impossible!

In November we acknowledged the impact of the pandemic on Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and held a benefit night at the sanctuary to help raise funds. We raised over \$5,000 on the night with our raffle, including a holiday donated by Wyndham Destinations, not to mention lots of cases of Veggie chips!

In December we had an End of Year Drinks at the recently opened Salty Fox Bar located on the roof of the new Rydges Gold Coast Airport Hotel. We enjoyed good food and entertainment, including a magician and as usual our raffle.

****Our First event** for 2021 was a presentation from Transport and Main Roads about the road to recovery, looking at the development of the M1 and other major works planned for SEQ.

Our March gathering was a luncheon. We invited the new CEO's of Destination Gold Coast and the Major Events Gold Coast bodies to speak about how those two groups would be working towards the recovery of the Gold Coast, with an emphasis on the Southern GC. The Mayor also attended and spoke at that luncheon. We had an excellent turnout for what was a sold out event.

In April we were hosted by the Currumbin RSL for their regular Community presentation. The timing was Anzac week and this was again a sold out event. There were a large range of presentations from the various bodies and groups that Currumbin RSL support in the Veterans arena, including supporting our more recent veterans, and those with mental health issues as a result of their service. The morning was very successful for the RSL.

**** In May we** had a business after hours event at a new member location, the Tallebudgera Surf Club. They put on great food and a good time was had by all!

For July we welcomed The Mayor, Tom Tate and Cllr Gail O'Neill for a post budget luncheon at Currumbin RSL. Over 120 guests heard the mayor and Cllr O'Neill present on the plans for the Southern Gold Coast.

Finally last month we had 80 guests attend our after dark at Balter Brewery. We always knew this would be a popular event, and we were right, we sold out!! The catering was provided by another new member Sumptuous Fine foods and the raffle for cartons of beer went down a treat!

The Chamber is recognised as the voice of business for our area from the Tallebudgera Creek to the NSW Border. As President I attend meetings most of these meetings. The Chamber is included in the Light Rail Business Advisory Group which has been meeting mainly on Zoom due to Covid 19. The Chamber is also an advisory to the World Surfing Reserve Local Stewardship committee, which meets quarterly.

We can't pass today without mentioning the impact COVID 19 has had on the Chamber movement and more importantly, you the businesses that we represent.

This time last year Australia was contemplating how we move to recover from the impacts of covid 19. Job Keeper was in place and the position of many businesses was starting to get clearer with the Code of Conduct for leases in place and being used to guide vital conversations between landlords and tenants.

**** During 2020 CCIQ**, the peak body of chambers in QLD, invited a group of the presidents of QLD Chambers to meet regularly to discuss policy, how we could help our local businesses and the impacts of the National cabinet regulations etc. During the last 12 months this group has highlighted to State government the differences between the controls and support put in place in neighbouring states and our own. Here in QLD our border closures have had the greatest impacts. Businesses that rely on visitors from overseas and interstate have been impacted heavily. The Tourism and accommodation industry on the Gold Coast has been decimated and almost every school holiday we seem to see visitors unable to arrive due to lockdowns in their states or our state.

In our region we have faced more barriers to trade than many others due to the State Border closure first announced in late March 2020 and subsequently changed on too many occasions to recall. The GSGC Chamber took up the cause and highlighted the impact of the border restrictions and have continued to voice the concerns of the small businesses about the damage done both to trade and the border community.

In July SEQ went into a snap lockdown and the border controls were reintroduced by the end of the month. The CCIQ presidents lobbied for a lockdown subsidy to be introduced especially after the second longer lockdown in early August. This resulted in a Covid Relief Grant being created by the state and federal government to aid business impacted by the lockdown. The \$600M package is the first package which has not been capped. This was because of the lobbying that we did with CCIQ to highlight the inequity of the grant systems in place to that point.

The meetings CCIQ have been holding have helped to develop and build relationships with many people including the Small Business Commissioner Maree Adshead. Following a call Maree and I had in August, where I raised the very real issues being faced because of the more stringent border pass system, with 50% of staff and customers on the wrong side of a line on a map, I was called by the Minister for Small Business Di Farmer to discuss our very localised problems. Minister Farmer has since been to visit Coolangatta on a number of occasions, culminating in a one on one meeting with myself and representatives of the Coolangatta businesses to address our concerns directly with the Minister.

On Tuesday this week this resulted in the new multi-million dollar package of support announced specifically for our area of the Border community. This result is something that I'm very proud to have been involved in helping to deliver for our businesses.

Our efforts remain focused on Covid 19, and it's impacts on small business whilst at the same time we are now pivoting to ensuring that we can be ready to grasp all the opportunities that will arise once vaccination rates are high enough to make lockdowns and border closures a thing of the past.

**** During COVID** 19 our Facebook page has seen Our followers increase by another 30% to over 700 since last year. The page is used to promote the Chamber, our activities and to keep the local businesses informed of events and activities in the area.

The chamber is active in other issues too. One longstanding arrangement is the support of PBC School, for Australian Business week. Again last December we sponsored this event by providing medallions for every student who took part in a week-long virtual business environment to learn about how business works. The Chamber also assists in locating business mentors for the event. We look forward to working with PBC again this year.

In summary we have continued to grow and build our relevance to you, our business community.

Our membership, and financial security continues to improve, despite Covid 19. We can now do more for our members and our dedicated management board are planning to take us even further in the coming year.

In closing I'd like to thank our past and future board members for their continuing endeavours and their commitment to what is a very voluntary role.

**** I'll now** pass you to our current treasurer, John Forrester – John