

ORBOST & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – 2015/16

The past 12 months has seen a lot of progress with projects in the district and the Chamber has had input to many of the changes. Employment is still an ongoing issue and the change in the demographics is having an impact on many aspects of the town. In this environment it is important to focus on doing what we do well and also focusing on some new directions for the district.

Chamber members have been active on a number of committees looking at the options for the future. These include :

- The Facilities Review steering group which commenced in mid 2014 and came to no conclusion and became the Forest Precinct Review steering committee which is still current
- The Orbost District Community Development Group
- The Orbost 2020 Marketing committee
- Management committee of the Orbost Visitor Information Centre
- The Nicholson St landscape Steering committee
- Santos Community Advisory committee
- DELWP fire roundtable forum
- The Steering committee of the Business mentoring program which delivered programs such as :
 - ✓ Business Continuity & Resilience
 - ✓ Starting Your Business and Keep Your Business on Track
 - ✓ Inspiring Young Entrepreneurs

Orbost Police attend Chamber meetings at regular intervals to discuss a range of issues

The Chamber continues to be part of the joint committee organising the Xmas eve festival and a key player in the administration and accounting for the event. This is a key event in Orbost and is rather unique in rural Victoria. It is great to see two new members put their hands up to improve the decorations in Nicholson St for Xmas 2016. We also again conducted the best lights in town and best decorated window as part of the festival.

We continued to lobby with the relevant authorities for issues such as :

- The reduction of camping fees at Corringale
- The importance of the duck season to the local economy
- Improved signage at entrances to the town
- Removal of weeds and blackberries at a number of locations
- Pool opening hours at the start and end of the season
- Maintenance of Snowy River walking track
- A speed limit reduction on the west side of Newmerella - which was implemented

The town entrance sign (Snowy River Country - Orbost) at the east end of town was destroyed during a truck accident and has been replaced by insurance. We took the opportunity to also replace the Welcome to Snowy River Country (Orbost on the Snowy) signs to the east and west of the town

We responded to various correspondence to external organisations and gave input to various planning processes and meetings

The Chamber continued with the administrative tasks associated with the management of the Orbost Visitor Information Centre which had just under 17,000 visitors during the 2015 calendar year. The future of the slab hut as a VIC is still unclear

One of the key issues for our community is to look after ourselves as far as possible and maintain local resilience. One way to do this is to encourage the community to shop locally and thereby maintain and create local jobs. The Chamber produced a new batch of “shop locally” posters for members premises and also facilitated a well attended customer service training session in conjunction with Business and Tourism East Gippsland.

The Chamber continues to promote the sale of goods and services vouchers which are redeemable in most businesses in Orbost. There is increasing interest from community in giving vouchers as presents and a number of businesses have purchased the vouchers for prizes or for Xmas bonuses for their staff. We need to build on this interest. The Lucky shopper raffle in another Chamber initiative to try to encourage locals to shop locally and keep jobs local

The Chamber also facilitated two meetings of young professionals and other new people to the town in an effort to form a social group which would help facilitate better interactions and help keep young people in the area

Two delegates regularly attended the monthly meetings of the Business and Tourism East Gippsland (BTEG) committee. This ensures that ODCCI views are represented.

Our membership numbers have held fairly steady over the year with a number of new faces as businesses change hands etc. I would like to thank all Chamber members for their ongoing financial support of the work of the Chamber.

I would particularly like to thank the small group of members who regularly attend our monthly meetings and their support and contributions to our list of achievements for the year.

Lastly, we again have some challenges ahead in 2016/17 particularly on the implementation issues around the Orbost 2020 vision and in particular the Age Friendly town concept. It would be great to get more members to our meetings as “more hands on deck” means we could achieve more into the future

Susan Hooper
President