

In 2017 we planned for a rebrand of the Commerce Ballarat logo to keep our organisation looking fresh and innovative. We also created some beautiful vision of our members and events with the help of Hstudios.

Digital media is an integral part of being in business in this day and age and for Commerce Ballarat our social media presence continues to strengthen which enables us to further support this city and our members. In 2017 we introduced regular posts that profiled the face behind the business, which have been very popular. You can follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

B31 Ballarat Business Month:

Commerce Ballarat facilitated B31 Ballarat Business Month for the third time. Thirty-two networking and development opportunities were delivered. We look forward to continued improvement in 2018 with increased attendance and diversity of events. **Thank you to sponsors:** City of Ballarat, Victorian Government, People @ Work, Crowe Horwath, Ink Digital, The Courier and Radio Ballarat.

BisNet Breakfast Program:

2017 again saw us delivering the BisNet Breakfast series, attendees at the breakfasts were mostly small to medium businesses across all industry sectors. This was the third year of facilitating these breakfasts and we were pleased to see a continued increase in attendance. **Guest speakers included;** James Pearson, Matthew Nicol, Anthony Di Fiore, Tony Clarkson, Tall Poppies, Paul Chapman, Susan Alberti, Peter Hudson and Patrick Shaw, speaking on a range of topics. **Thank you to sponsors:** City of Ballarat, Radio Ballarat, BJT Legal, Butler Chartered Accountants, Adroit Insurance Group and People @ Work.

Business Weekly:

Distribution continues to rise each year in line with membership. The weekly is an important source of relevant information and is also another avenue for members to promote their news. We refreshed the look of the Business Weekly to reflect the update with our logos and to make it easier reading for individuals.

Business Awards:

The partnership with Federation Business School strengthens and will continue through to 2020. The awards are an opportunity for businesses to review and reflect on the past 12 month's performance. Participation continues to rise each year with over 1700 people involved throughout the process in 2017. **Thank you to sponsors:** Federation Business School, Loreto College, CGU Insurance, City of Ballarat, Central Highlands Water, Harwood Andrews, Visit Ballarat, The Courier, Mercure Ballarat Hotel and Convention Centre, Power FM, The WIN Network, Regional Development Australia – Grampians, Stockland Wendouree and GMHBA.

b2b 'Business to Ballarat':

The biannual media campaign focuses on both business to business spending and encouraging awareness in the general public of the importance to our city of spending locally. In 2017 in addition to annual Christmas Competition we instigated a new competition the A-Z of Ballarat business which created good engagement on social media. Commerce Ballarat invests heavily in these campaigns but they would not be possible without the support of our b2b **Gold sponsors** RU Advertising, Simplex Insurance Solutions, Ballarat Mercedes-Benz, Sovereign Press, Crowe Horwath, Telstra Business Centre and Plus IT and Wilson's Fruit & Vegetables. We also thank our **Bronze sponsors** Central Victorian Investments and **Media** The Courier, 3BA/PowerFM, The WIN Network and Prime7. **Supported** by The City of Ballarat.

Events:

All Commerce Ballarat events this year were well attended. The After Five is just one example of a great way to learn about the services of local businesses and a perfect opportunity to network, the After Five had an average of 60 attendees per event. I would like to thank our After Five hosts over the past year; BRIMARCO, The Golfers Lounge, UnitingCare Ballarat, Body Brilliance, Formation Hairstylists and RDV and Mitchell Harris.

Development:

Commerce Ballarat is constantly sourcing development opportunities for our members, most of which are subsidised so they are free or at a much reduced fee. In 2017 we ran Business Awards application writing workshops, an Ignite your business workshop and a Business Success Seminar in partnership with Federation Business School.

Mentoring Program:

This free members program is aimed at new businesses or those that require assistance to grow or develop. Ten businesses are annually given the valuable opportunity to learn from individual mentoring and group workshops. In 2017 we ticked over 50 businesses that have participated since the inception of this program. **We thank our Mentors;** Vicki Coltman, Kay Jackson, Peter Wilson, Darren Evans, Brett Macdonald, Tony Chew, Martijn Schroder, Peter Flynn, Mick Taylor, Laurie Gillett, Jamie Sleep and Jennifer Kelly.

Business Day Out:

In 2017 over 200 people from across Regional Victoria attended **Business Day Out** and were inspired by Gus Balbontin, Stephen Macdonald, Kevin Wall, Steph Prem and Mark McCrindle. It is important that BDO be supported by the business community, it is a chance to see high profile speakers but at an affordable cost. **Thank you to sponsors:** City of Ballarat, Brown Ink Design, Simplex Insurance Solutions, Sovereign Press, Mercure Ballarat Hotel and Convention Centre, Radio Ballarat, The WIN Network, WDEA, VicSuper, The Courier and the Victorian Government.

Advocacy:

Commerce Ballarat represented our members on a wide range of issues to the community and Local, State and Federal Government.

Including:

- Penalty Rates, hospitality and retail sectors
- Penalty Rates and Fair Pay Select Committee
- City of Ballarat future planning
- Mair and Sturt Streets VicRoad
- Planning Ballarat Major Projects

In conclusion:

The continued success and growth of Commerce Ballarat is due to many factors. I thank each of the Board members for their time and enthusiasm. In particular this year I want to offer my gratitude and thanks to our outgoing Chair David Wright, this organisation has been changed forever by the commitment of this man to not only Commerce Ballarat but to the city as a whole. It has been an honour and a pleasure to work with you for 10 years as judge in the awards, chair of the judging panel, CB Board member and finally Chair for the past three years. Unfortunately, I think I have run out of jobs to give you 😊

I thank the City of Ballarat for supporting us in our goal to grow the Ballarat Business community, I thank both Cr Amy Johnson and Andrea Cameron who have both stepped down after several years of valued service. I welcome and look forward to working with Cr Jim Rinaldi and Samantha Magill in 2018.

Of course it goes without saying that this organisation would not exist let alone deliver without the support of our sponsors, members and volunteers. I thank them for continuing to say yes no matter how many times I knock on their door.

We are a small but extremely committed team here at Commerce Ballarat, we believe in our business community and we know that they make this city a better place to live.

I am so very grateful for the wonderful people I work with and I sincerely thank Michelle, Zoe, Deb and Claire for their incredible work in 2017. In particular I thank Michelle and Zoe for continuing to make me look good. I know who really runs this organisation!

Remember b2b Business to Ballarat, try and buy local.

Jodie Gillett, Chief Executive Officer, Commerce Ballarat