

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

Our Mission

To provide strong, reliable leadership and advocacy on matters relevant to business in greater Ballarat.

Our Vision

To be the number one relevant resource for business.

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. A #ShopBallarat campaign ran across traditional and social media in November and December as well as our annual Christmas Competition. This year participants had to spend \$30 at a participating business between November to December to go in the draw to win one of three \$1000 prize packs. Our #GetYourWinterCoatOn campaign ran across the Winter months through traditional and social media marketing, as well as a competition beginning in May that encourages entrants to celebrate everything that makes Ballarat amazing. Commerce Ballarat invests heavily in these campaigns, but they would not be possible without the support of our b2b Gold sponsors Simplex Insurance Solutions, Wilson's Fruit & Vegetables, Sovereign Press, Mercedes-Benz Ballarat, Shine Lawyers Ballarat, Telstra Business Centre Plus IT, Central Victorian Investments and Ballarat Materials Handling Equipment. We also thank our media partners Ballarat Times News Group, 3BA/Power FM, The WIN Network and Prime7 and **Supported by** City of Ballarat

Biznet Breakfast Series

The Biznet Breakfasts are usually held on the first Tuesday of each month excluding January & November, they provide participants with an opportunity to network on the morning as well as hear from a broad range of guest speakers and topics. These breakfasts are also held at different member venues each month. Attendee numbers were higher in 2022/2023, with an average of 96 attendees per breakfast. Guest speakers and topics included:

- Sean Trewick & Circular Economy Panel
- Dean Pearson, NAB – The Changing Economy
- Runway Ballarat – Tech Entrepreneurs
- Breakfast with the Stars – Ballarat Turf Club
- 3BA Christmas Appeal & Crazy Ideas College
- Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute – Ann Peacock
- City of Ballarat update
- Petspiration & Mackillop Family Services – Corporate Citizenship
- Business Confidence Survey results & panel

Thank you to sponsors Adroit Insurance & Risk, BJT Legal, Findex, Ballarat LIVING Magazine, Hip Pocket Workwear & Safety, gforce employment + recruitment, City of Ballarat & Radio Ballarat.

Business Weekly

Is currently distributed each Wednesday to over 1700 local business people that are members of Commerce Ballarat. The weekly is an important source of relevant information and is also another avenue for members to promote their good news.

Business Awards Awards 2022

The partnership Commerce Ballarat has with Federation University continues to evolve and strengthen, it is a critical partnership for our business community, we thank Federation University and in particular Professor Duncan Bentley, Professor Christina Lee, Sam Henson, and the team. The awards are a rare chance for businesses to review and reflect on their performance. Participation continues to be strong with 1700+ business people involved throughout the process in 2022. **Thank you to the 2022 sponsors** Federation University, Nevetts Lawyers, Central Highlands Water, nbn Local, Cafs, Hip Pocket, Workwear & Safety (Ballarat), Bartlett Manufacturing, Federation University Technology Park, Regional, Development Australia Grampians, Runway HQ , Mercure Ballarat Hotel and Convention Centre, Ballarat Times News Group, City of Ballarat, Power FM, Vitrafy Life Sciences, The WIN Network & Admedia.

B31 Ballarat Business Festival

Commerce Ballarat facilitates B31 Ballarat Business Festival in August every year with a variety of networking and development opportunities delivered throughout the month. In 2022 the B31 program delivered a number of events throughout the month of August, including Biznet Breakfast, YPN, How To Tender Right!, Wellbeing, 2022 Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards, Mindshop Excellence, Unlocking the Secrets to Team Wellbeing, BRT Ballarat Accommodation Forum, Breaking down the Barriers for Women in Trades, Surviving and Thriving, Networking 1-0-FUN!, Circular Ballarat program - Aspire Workshop, Victorian Regional Safety Conference, RAILSsafe, Sovereign Hill site visit, BrainSweet Workshop & the Small Business Bus. Thank you to sponsors JK Personnel, Shine Lawyers, Ballarat Times News Group, The Ad Group, Radio Ballarat and Supported by City of Ballarat. B31 has undergone a rebrand and will be back bigger and better than ever in 2023.

Networking Events

A variety of networking events such as Business Day Out and the Young Professionals Network were held in 2022.

The Ballarat Experience

The Ballarat Experience is an initiative of Commerce Ballarat, aimed at driving tourism within Ballarat and supporting our local businesses. 'Money can't buy' experiences are created and then put up as part of a competition to be won. The initiative is marketed externally to Ballarat throughout Victoria via Facebook.

7 competitions were run on The Ballarat Experience Facebook page in 2022/2023 with a total of 38,754 impressions, total reach of 180,261 and total engagement of 23,761.

Development

Commerce Ballarat sources many different development opportunities for our members. Some examples of what was delivered in 2022/23:

- Business Day Out
- Grant and Tender Writing Workshops
- Business Awards Application Workshops
- Industry Chats (People & Culture, Hospitality and Retail)

- Business Success Seminar in partnership with Federation University
- Psychological Health Regulations Info Session
- Skilled Work Regional Visa Info Sessions
- Cultural Awareness Training
- Industrial Relations Education Workshop
- Annualised Wage Arrangements Workshop
- 'Brainsweet' Nurturing your mental health

Business Day Out

In May 2023 attendees will come from across Regional Victoria to participate in Business Day Out. They will be inspired by Nedd Brockmann who is a 24-year-old sparky from Central West NSW who is focused on changing the world one step at a time. Matt Nunn who is the founder and Managing Director of Nunn Media, his objective was to not only create an organisation that delivers great results for his clients but also to retain the company's family values. Alex Kelly - Voted in Out for Australia's 30 Under 30 for outstanding LGBTQ+ individuals in 2022, he has made his mark actively advocating for the LGBTQ+ community, and championing inclusivity in corporate Australia. Panel Discussion 'Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable' with James Thompson (CEO, Luv-A-Duck), Sara Quon (CEO, The Sovereign Hill Museums Association), Claire Vrieze (Psychologist, Commerce Ballarat). 12 Secondary Schools including 500+ staff and students will also have the opportunity to hear Nedd Brockmann's story. The day will conclude with an exciting new networking session that will bring together many local businesses to display their products and services.

Industry & Education Partnership Bus Tour

Once again we were thrilled to partner with the Victorian Education Department and HighlandsLLEN to deliver a tour in March this year. Secondary school Principals and Career Advisors were taken on a bus tour with the objective of giving education leaders a better understanding of industry and employment trends. Sectors focused on in 2023 were health, early childhood education, manufacturing, hospitality and construction. We sincerely thank our partners, secondary schools and industries, Federation University, Ferndale/So Soft, Hop Temple, Regional Development Victoria – Grampians, Bartlett Manufacturing, Central Highlands at Victorian Skills Authority, City of Ballarat, John Holland & Integra Group.

Business Mentoring Program

A free program for members offering one on one mentoring and group workshops. This program offers mentoring to new businesses and or those that are looking for growth or change.

Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance

In 2022/23 we continued to facilitate VRCA. Mission - To be recognised as the collective voice for regional Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations. Vision - A prosperous regional Victoria; vibrant, healthy, heard and connected. Currently there are 21 members and continue to expand.

Advocacy

Commerce Ballarat represents our members and the wider business community on a wide range of issues to all levels of government.

Including:

- Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance
- Business Organisations Catch Up (COVID) - CoB, C4B, BRT and AIGroup.
- Central Highlands Economic Development (COVID)
- Central Highlands Regional Round Table
- Ministerial Small Business Recovery Committee
- Central Highlands Inclusion Working Group

- Ballarat Heritage Advisory Committee
- Central Highlands Water Customer Advisory Panel
- Central Highlands Regional Assembly
- Runway Project Control Group
- Youth Integrated Health and Wellbeing Hub Working Group
- Grampians Coordination (COVID) Group Meeting
- Technical Advisory Group for State Gov Small Business Wellbeing Project
- Energy Regional Advisory Panel
- Central Highlands Innovation and Entrepreneurship Group

As always we continue to stretch our limits to care for this business community. I would like to acknowledge the Board for the generous time they commit and a special thank you to Anne Alexander, James Robson and Ewen Fletcher for always being available when required.

This year we will say goodbye to a long term member of the Board, Hayley Coates. Hayley has been on our Board for 10 years, past three as Chair, I say this with great sadness! We cannot thank you enough for all you have done, the organisation you leave behind is much grown and definitely stronger. Ballarat is fortunate to have such a generous business community.

Last but not least my amazing team, whilst occasionally I see disbelief when I suggest some new idea or initiative, it never lasts long and they immediately throw themselves into the task. I hope they know but just in case they need reminding, our business community is so lucky to have such committed hard workers on their side. Huge thanks to Sam, Felicity, Michaela, Michelle, Zoe, Cody, Claire and Deb.

Jodie Gillett
Chief Executive Officer
Commerce Ballarat

b2b Business to Ballarat, always try and buy local.