

Chair AGM Report 2023

It has been an absolute honour to serve as Chair of Commerce Ballarat for the last two years, not to mention numerous years before that as Deputy to the two previous Chairs, Nick Thurlbeck and David Wright. Over those years I have had the privilege of watching first-hand the growth of this organisation, through increased membership, new programs and strengthened partnerships.

I would like to thank my current board members for their consistent engagement with Commerce Ballarat and our members generally. The strength of an organisation comes from both employees and administration and in recent years we have been blessed with a high calibre of people in both.

My role as Chair has been made so much easier by a supportive board who each bring different skills to the table and ensure that good governance flows without ever becoming a chore.

To my Deputy, Anne Alexander and Treasurer, Ewen Fletcher, thank you for the additional time that you put in, month after month, to support me, our CEO and staff.

I would also like to thank outgoing board member Adrian Doyle for his commitment over the last two years. His knowledge and insight have been invaluable.

We have two board positions available at the AGM this year and a number of worthy applicants. I look forward to new ideas as the board regenerates with new members.

At operational level, the ship continues to be aptly guided by our CEO, Jodie Gillett who provides daily inspiration to our amazing staff. With more new faces joining the team this year, there are now too many to mention here, but know that each employee plays an important part in achieving the success that we have.

Whilst the last three years have no doubt been among the toughest for business owners globally, we are fortunate in Ballarat to have a business community who continue to look for the positives.

The recent Business Confidence Survey commissioned by Commerce Ballarat in conjunction with Federation University and City of Ballarat showed an increased level of confidence within the Ballarat region compared with the 2020-2021 findings. While challenges remain, and new hurdles arise, the strength in community and B2B support set Ballarat in good stead going forward.

With the 2026 Commonwealth Games fast approaching, we will continue to work with other stakeholders, including the City of Ballarat and Committee for Ballarat, to advocate for legacy infrastructure and ensure that we use this opportunity to provide lasting benefits for our members and the Ballarat community more generally.

The theme of our upcoming Business Day Out is “Get comfortable being uncomfortable” and this is a message that Commerce Ballarat lives and breathes. Commerce Ballarat is constantly evolving and we



welcome feedback from members and the community and look for ways to refresh and reinvent to ensure that we remain relevant.

So finally, to our members, thank you once again for your support this year. We are and always will be fundamentally a membership organisation and we cannot exist without you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hayley Coates', is written over a faint, light-colored oval shape that serves as a signature line.

Hayley Coates

Chair, Commerce Ballarat