

## **Bathurst Wholefood Co-op Chair Report AGM 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

Welcome to you all and thank you for attending this Bathurst Wholefood Co-operative AGM.

This has been quite an extraordinary year, not just for the Co-op, but for all of us personally and as a community.

Many things had to change as a result of the threat of Covid 19, but the Co-op has been going better than ever. From March to June, even with our doors closed to customers we were continuing to provide fresh fruit, vegies and other household products to the Bathurst community, and continuing to support local growers and producers. Our customers readily made the transition to phone and online ordering, with pick-ups and deliveries, and our sales greatly increased through this time.

This was all made possible through the great work of our team of volunteers, all our suppliers, and our dedicated staff who assisted during that incredibly busy and unprecedented time.

The shop re-opened from June to once again provide Co-op members and customers the opportunity to purchase quality organic and locally sourced produce while experiencing that welcome place of connection. Phone and online orders, pick-ups and deliveries continue to be a significant part of our turnover.

We have seen an increase in membership and the surge in sales has meant more paid staff on the floor, more buying power and increases in the range of products we are selling. We have expanded our personal and homecare range and have healthy alternative snack and convenience foods.

Our online presence continues to grow with regular Facebook and Instagram posts about what's new in the shop, upcoming events, an occasional supplier profile, great fresh produce photos and recipe ideas. We currently have over 3000 Facebook followers. Our online ordering has benefited greatly from Cindy's work with ongoing upgrades to our website including new products and the capacity to remember previous orders.

This year has again seen a number of staff changes. Cathie returned as Shop Co-ordinator two days a week, with Kiri Armstrong and Sandra Martin also filling the role on a job share basis. Wendy continues in her part-time role.

The shop continues to pack plenty into its limited space. We are still on the search for larger premises that will fit within our budget. To that end we hope to be issuing a second round of Community Investment Notes in the near future.

This year has seen a continued increase in competition in the marketplace for the "wholefood dollar" with continuing growth and competition in the wholefood industry. This is seen as a positive step towards raising the profile of organic and locally grown produce and products, and continues to challenge us toward continuously improving how we meet the Co-op's objectives of:

1. Purchasing regional/organic produce and products for sale to our customers

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2. Work in conjunction with existing organisations to raise awareness in the community about the benefits of buying and consuming locally sourced and organic produce.
3. Promoting and/or creating a market for local and organic produce generated by the local farming community.

This challenging year has seen an increased awareness of the importance of sourcing produce and products locally, and the great benefits of supporting local suppliers. Bathurst Wholefood Co-op continues to be a healthy and thriving community organisation with an enthusiastic and highly motivated staff and volunteer base and a committed board of directors. A continuing supportive and encouraging membership will enable us to move strongly into our next phase of growth and business development.

Lastly, we have had three resignations from the Board over the year. I would like to thank Mick Burke, Bruce Thompson and David Hughes for their contributions as directors of the Co-op and wish them well in their next ventures. Thanks especially to David for his work as secretary for the Board. These three casual vacancies have been filled over the year by Julian Woods, Cindy Walker, and Graham Stirling. They have nominated to continue as directors into 2021. I would like to say a huge thank you to Denise O'Grady who has done a massive job this year. Denise has completed a three-year term as a director, and has graciously accepted the invitation to continue on for another term. Thanks also to Emily Cotterill and Nathan Pearce who will also continue as directors into 2021.

Kathleen Jones

Chair, Bathurst Wholefood Co op