

Gawler Business Development Group Chair's Report 2014

Once again this has been a rewarding and exciting year. It has been a privilege to work with the Board and to feel we have achieved a great deal for the business owners of Gawler.

All the Board members give generously of their time and skill. They do it as an altruistic contribution to the business community in Gawler. No-one benefits their own business by being part of the Board but rather they contribute in the hope they will help other business owners gain by the work they put in.

This year we provided some retail businesses with retail and merchandising training which has been of great value to the participants. They have realised increases in sales and enjoyed greater profitability as a result of the skills the trainers imparted.

We also ran training in marketing and sales skills with a well regarded presenter, Bruce Bowen. The feedback from participants was very positive. Our one disappointment was that more businesses didn't attend. The training we provide is free to members or done at only the cost of catering. It is one of the benefits of the membership levy.

The "hero building" project was a very satisfying project in which we were involved. The owners of the Gawler Bakery in Murray Street were assisted in applying for a heritage grant to upgrade their premises in keeping with the historical aspects of the town centre. The Board helped them with planning approval and the subcontracting of the work by putting them in touch with the relevant authorities and trades people. We have identified a number of other buildings that require upgrading and are working with the owners to help them access grants and funding to contribute to the cost of renovations. We believe the improved appearance of buildings raises the appeal of the entire town and will help draw more people which, in turn, will benefit all businesses.

This year we were again involved with the SALA Art Trail in Gawler. After the success of the inaugural event last year a number of the artists involved set up their own committee to manage the event. The GBDG supported that with a strong marketing campaign and we are pleased to see an idea from the Board taken on by a community group with the expertise to make this an annual successful event.

This year has been particularly valuable in forming a good working relationship with the Town of Gawler. The CEO, Henry Inat, instigated a monthly meeting with us when he took on the role and that has proved very advantageous. One example of this was the council support of the SALA Art Trail. The council provided the Institute at very little cost, improved the lighting in there and greatly supported the concept. We are grateful for the assistance given by Henry and his senior staff and look forward to much more collaboration.

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We supported the council in their sponsorship of the Mainstreet SA conference, which was held in Gawler this year. Board members also attended a number of the workshops and gained valuable insights which have informed concepts in place for the coming year.

We continued the on-line competitions with the intention of driving people to the Gawler business website. More people are now using this to locate businesses in Gawler. Another of the benefits of membership, any business has a listing and link to their own website free of charge. Businesses are also able to use the site to promote special offers and information. We have also updated the website to make it more interesting, easier to use and more interactive with mobile devices.

We have just enjoyed our second Gawler Jazz Festival. This was another Board initiative which has proven very successful with visitors from all over the state coming for the weekend of jazz. Plans are already afoot for an even bigger event next year with the possibility of some very well known artists being involved. The Jazz Festival is held on the same weekend as the Rotary Village Fair and is an example of collaboration of special interests group in the town.

We will again be supporting the Rotary Christmas Carols and, as we did last year, will be running our competition for Christmas Hampers, the winners of which will receive their hamper at the Christmas Carols. This year we are working in conjunction with the Lions Club which will assemble the hampers, supporting their fund raising efforts while making the organisation of this task much more manageable for Sigrid.

I acknowledge the hard work put in by our business liaison and marketing officer, Sigrid Murljadic. Nothing is too much trouble for her. She goes above and beyond to not only fulfil her role with the Board but to serve the interests of the Gawler business community. She is a joy to work with and appreciated by all the Board members who know what effort she puts in.

It has been a privilege to be the Chair again this year and I thank all the Board members for their enthusiasm and the expertise they bring to their roles.