

Roger and I moved to the Kilcoy District location of Hazeldean in April 2017. We fell in love with area and the surrounding Region. It was a very natural move for me to utilise my skill base and engage with local businesses. Roger and I attended a few Chamber meetings and my takeaway was that I believed I could bring a renewed and positive outlook to the Chamber. Many of the local business owners agreed with me and offered their support at the 2018 AGM where I accepted the "President" nomination.

The Year began by focussing on meeting business owners within the Kilcoy District. What took me by surprise was the ease of proximity to the seats of government, the opportunity that this presented and the lack of an active Somerset Business presence. I enthusiastically engaged with government representatives; Took up issues that impacted local business operation; Stepped up as the Champion of Kilcoy business and Encouraged membership by a show of promotional and advocacy support. Wonderful results came from these efforts. Our membership grew, regional presence grew and most recently, media attention from local, regional and national media outlets.

I reached out and requested support of local businesses in the form of accommodation for office space, office furniture, music, IT and web support. I must thank Garth Duffy for offering the Mary St office space, Roger for providing the Desk, IT, web support and music. Donna from Kilcoy Beauty for the lovely chairs for visitors, Back Yard Bling for the office plant decoration and Daniel from Jigsaw for ongoing Web support. Also Jim Davies for his support of our Dinner with the Regional Development Authority Ipswich West Moreton, Amar for the Jellybeans for the TooMoo cyclists, Coff n Co Bakery for catering the first FM101.5 meeting and Matthew Robinson and KPC for their ongoing support.

I reached out to local councillors and slowly forged productive and friendly relationships with all local councillors, Directors, CEO's and our Mayor. I am very grateful for the display of support of the Chamber from our Council team. I thank our Mayor Graham Lehman for officiating tonight. I also reached out our local State and Federal members for guidance and mentoring. I have to thank both Deb Frecklington and Shayne Neumann for supporting my endeavours as Chamber President. I also reached out to the Somerset Regional Business Alliance where I gained the local knowledge required to build a Regional Chamber presence. Many thanks to Paul Heymans, Darren Zanow and Mark Wells for their support of the Chambers endeavours.

The Chamber has successfully grown in membership and continues to expand within the Region. The Chamber Website is utilised to showcase the members businesses. The pages have grown to encompass resources, links, news, newsletters and information. A major goal is to redesign the website to encompass a presence to ALL Somerset businesses. We are a region of small operators, the majority with less than 4 employees. My vision for the Chamber is to step up to support those smaller operators without a good web or social presence. To broaden the reach of ALL local businesses to a wider audience.

Kilcoy has an opportunity to lead the Region by embracing the Somerset Regions Business by forging a new Chamber of Commerce Somerset. All voices deserve to be heard and although Somerset is made up of several townships all with their own localised feel, all are dependent on Somerset Regional Council, State and Federal Governments making decisions that impact the local business community. What better way to enable effective influence than to have a BIG Business voice.

Some of the successes of our Kilcoy Chamber include recognition of the strength of Regional Committee memberships that inspire participation and active discussion. They are Chamber of Commerce and industry QLD – Regional Policy Panel, we will hear from Mr Colin Fruk of CCIQ shortly; Regional Development Authority Ipswich West Moreton; West Moreton Trade & Investment; SRC Economic Development Committee and Tourism Advisory Committee. In my role as President I have attended many Regional events conducted by Chambers of Commerce Brisbane, Toowoomba and Gatton and participated in QLD government policy panels.

The Chamber's thorough report of NBN issues in the town was successfully taken up by our local federal member and submitted to Federal Govt as part of the whole NBN review. I engaged with QLD State representatives over NBN issues and we will soon have a representative here in Somerset to discuss the NBN and to help with Q and A. Thanks to Cheryl Gaedtke for supporting these efforts. The Chamber has also been effective in providing TMR with knowledge about Kilcoy business needs in respect of road works and business interruption. The Chamber remains a voice for business with TMR.

Advocating for effluent control is making noise in the right direction. Following the Gatton Star interview, ABC TV contacted me to discuss the effluent issue. They will broadcast a story soon highlighting the need for greater support of our Transport Industry by advocating for a Wash down facility in our Region and raising the need for the Heavy Vehicle Bypass.

The Chamber has embraced the need for local businesses to have safe and effective platform for discussion, problem sharing and problem solving. One business problem can be another's solution. One member recently shared the story of how a conversation with a neighbour resulted in an out of work community member with a specific skill set, being employed by a business who needed that skill set yet could not find anyone through normal recruitment practices. Simple friendly dialogue resulted in a win-win situation for the business.

The Chamber would like to see local business sharing their knowledge and problem solving with our local High schools. Giving our kids a taste of how they can find skills and grow their knowledge through working in local communities. We have begun discussions with KSHS on the best way to integrate a presentation into the school curriculum. We encourage any future participation. On the topic of Youth and Chamber involvement, Jack McSweeney the YMCA Youth Ambassador for Green House will present at our September B2B.

As president I have continued Chamber legacy to engage guest speakers who offer relevant and interesting topics. September will also see Family Business Australia speaker Mr Lloyd Russell.

I am forever grateful to the local business community for words of support and encouragement. I am fortunate to have enjoyed the wisdom of Mr Terry Dredge and other extinguished locals. I am encouraged that the time is right to forge the pathway for a truly Somerset Chamber that works with ALL Somerset Businesses. We are a vast region but our businesses share the same issues, problems and opportunities. Our Region is rich in Tourist Destinations which we must embrace. Our Region has available, right now both free and cost effective marketing options. Local Websites like the Chamber, google business and BVRT offer far reaching audience participation. Various Programs available to businesses to promote customer support and retention such as RSL Veterans and Defence Cards, SRC Business Register and Why Leave Town Gift Cards (agenda items). FM 101.5 Moreton Bays Own community Radio Station reaching Kilcoy and District, membership of the

chamber is the only financial outlay for access to 7 million hits on their website. Craig Hewlett and his team will present the benefits of this relationship in the General B2B to follow.

I must especially thank my executive team, Sally and Garry for their support and guidance. All of our members for their support, advice and ideas. And Of course behind every President is a “First” partner. Roger has been a constant support especially during all the challenges faced this past year. Namely the laptop dying, the email not functioning, setting up wireless links for use in the Mary Street Office, media responses, searching for the Trademark and many other little things.

The Region is experiencing confidence in business. Kilcoy, Fernvale, Toogoolawah, Harlin all have new businesses opening and renewal of businesses recently sold. The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail and the Kilcoy Race Club offer “opportunities” that once the business community fully taps into, will enjoy economic prosperity. I believe the community wants to see Somerset business thrive not just survive.

I am for a strong Somerset Region. This is my home. As a business owner, I welcome the efforts of the Council to engage with stakeholders for our betterment but I caution that we should not rely on the Council alone. The Chamber of Commerce is the perfect platform for our strong distinguished voice.

Let’s lead not be led.

Please, join in the discussion. Let’s Talk.

Thankyou.

Bronwyn Davies

President 2018-2019