

Talking Business

December 2020

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Paul's Corner

Well, this year was not what we expected. At the time of writing this, Victorians are just getting used to the new COVID normal.

Greater Dandenong Business welcomed the Victorian Government's update in late October which saw businesses start to re-open.

In this issue of *Talking Business* we include some vital information about COVID Safety Plans which all businesses must have in order to remain open and stop the spread of this deadly virus. You can read this story on page 3.

We thank our big-hearted business community who continue to support Council's Material Aid program (pages 6 and 7). On page 12, South East Business Networks (SEBN) celebrate the varied projects which have continued to see success despite the many pandemic hurdles.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Christmas holiday period and the summer ahead. This year has been extremely challenging and there is no doubt we all deserve a reprieve.

On behalf of Greater Dandenong Business I wish our business community and their families a safe and happy holiday season. May I also encourage you to shop local and support our business community when visiting friends and family to play your part in supporting our resilient business community.

Paul Kearsley
Director Business, Engineering
and Major Projects

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TAKING TO THE FOOTPATHS – Outdoor dining in Greater Dandenong

In preparation for the easing of stage two restrictions, staff from Business and Revitalisation, Transport, Local Laws and Community Wellbeing worked together to develop outdoor dining options to support our local hospitality businesses. Council want to make it as easy as possible for businesses to safely welcome back the community to restaurants and cafes.

Businesses can apply to the State Government for a grant of up to \$5,000 to prepare themselves for outdoor dining, applications close on 11 December. Council has waived fees for footpath trading permits

across the municipality in order to further support business.

There are four tiers of outdoor dining options developed for Greater Dandenong restaurants and cafes:

- **Footpath Trading:** allows for dining furniture directly outside own premises.
- **Extended Footpath Trading:** allows for dining furniture to extend outside neighbouring shopfronts.
- **Kerbside Car Park Trading:** allows businesses to take over carpark spaces for the use of outdoor dining activities.

- **Pop-up Community Dining:** allows for a group of businesses to establish a collective outdoor dining area in a designated location (such as kerb overstands, public spaces or roads)

Council has received \$500,000 from State Government to put towards outdoor dining initiatives and support. Council Officers have been out speaking to businesses to better understand what is needed and how Council can best support our local hospitality sector.

Further information:

greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/outdoor-dining

All businesses must have a COVID-19 Safety plan

It is mandatory for every Victorian business that is open to have a **COVIDSafe Plan**. Your plan must follow six COVIDSafe principles: ensure physical distancing, wear a face mask, practise good hygiene, keep records and act quickly if workers become unwell, avoid interactions in enclosed spaces and create workforce bubbles.

Organisations with multiple worksites must complete a COVIDSafe Plan for each worksite.

Your COVIDSafe Plan must demonstrate:

- Your actions to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) to your workplace
- The type of face mask or personal protective equipment (PPE) required for your workforce
- How you will prepare for, and respond to, a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus in your workplace
- How you will meet all the requirements set out by the Victorian Government.

- Some higher-risk industries or workplaces have additional requirements of employers and employees.

View further information, templates and advice on COVIDSafe Plans and High Risk COVIDSafe Plans on the Creating a COVIDSafe workplace page of Business Victoria’s website.

COVIDSafe Plans in languages other than English are also available on the website.

coronavirus.vic.gov.au/business

JobKeeper Payment extended

The JobKeeper Payment has been extended until 28 March 2021.

There are two extension periods:

- **JobKeeper extension one:**
28 September 2020 to 3 January 2021, and
- **JobKeeper extension two:**
4 January 2021 to 28 March 2021.

To be eligible for the extension periods, businesses must show a decline in their actual GST turnover for the September and December 2020 quarters, relative to a comparable period (generally the same quarter in 2019). Alternative turnover tests are available in some circumstances.

There are different JobKeeper payment rates for each extension period :

- **JobKeeper extension one:**
Tier one is \$1,200 per fortnight (before tax),
Tier two rate is \$750 per fortnight (before tax).
- **JobKeeper extension two:**
Tier one rate is \$1,000 per fortnight (before tax),
Tier two rate is \$650 per fortnight (before tax).

The tiered JobKeeper rates are based on the total hours during their reference period that each eligible employee worked, or an eligible business participant was actively engaged in the business.

For more information about the JobKeeper payment, including the new rules and how to apply, visit:

ato.gov.au/jobkeeperpayment

Register for a webinar:
ato.gov.au/sbwebinars

Noble Park revitalisation grant

Noble Park is set to receive a financial boost with Council recently receiving a grant from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions for revitalisation activities within the Noble Park Activity Centre.

The \$190,000 investment will go towards the Ross Reserve All Abilities Playground, providing an inclusive experience for a diverse range of visitors of all ages and abilities. It will be a place where people can participate and play alongside their friends and family in a relaxing and enjoyable social environment.

With the successful grant adding to secured funds from State Government and Council, Stage 1B of the playground can now be implemented. This stage brings additional all-abilities play elements including: new park seats, picnic tables, a log climber and balance beam, a roller slide and supporting infrastructure including bike hoops, concrete, gravel paving,



and additional soft fall surfaces. Completion of this project is set for mid-2021 and will create a destination for residents of Greater Dandenong and the broader region.

The Ross Reserve All Abilities Playground will complement business activity and visitor attraction to Noble Park Activity Centre while building on the centre's sense of community spirit and much-loved village character. The project will support the centre as an important destination with multigenerational community facilities while encouraging sporting and recreational pursuits within easy walking distance to the retail centre, public transport and the Djerring Trail.

Shaping Victoria's Growing Social Enterprise Sector

The Victorian Government is getting on with growing the state's social enterprise sector inviting a reference group to work with Government on the next iteration of the Social Enterprise Strategy. The new strategy is set to be released in mid-2021.

Australia's first-ever Social Enterprise Strategy was launched by the Victorian Government in 2017 and focused on building the capacity and skills of the sector, increasing impact and innovation and improving market access through initiatives like the Government's Social Procurement Framework.

Victoria's next social enterprise strategy will build on this foundational

work to further develop the unique contributions that social enterprises make to the Victorian community. The Social Enterprise Strategy Reference Group will oversee consultation with the sector, providing expert advice and direction on the development of the renewed strategy. At the time of publishing, the plan was for the group to meet for the first time in early November 2020.

Working with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) and Victoria's social enterprise sector, the Reference Group is tasked with ensuring a whole-of-sector perspective is represented in the renewed strategy to reflect current and future needs.

Grant program provides businesses opportunity to plan for future

Greater Dandenong businesses have been doing their very best to remain in business during the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown limitations in 2020.

Greater Dandenong City Council recently launched a Business Grant Program to assist businesses to remain open. On Monday 26 October the second round of applications closed at 5pm.

The Business Grants Program aimed to provide immediate financial assistance to eligible Greater Dandenong small to medium sized businesses affected by COVID-19.

The grants were provided to businesses who could demonstrate how the grant would assist them to support business sustainability through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As per the guidelines, Round two of the program opened on Monday 19 October and applications remained open until the pool of funds were exhausted.

For many businesses, it has been simply about survival during this second lockdown. The grant provided businesses a chance to consider what they needed beyond 'right now' to see their business grow.

Greater Dandenong City Council Mayor Cr Angela Long said the business community had met the challenges of this year with enthusiasm and a sense of hope.

"In the first round we received applications requesting a wide range of items including support to upgrade business software, training to expand digital presences and furniture and equipment upgrades."

"The Victorian Government recently announced the easing of restrictions. We are thrilled for our businesses as we take another step forward towards living a 'Covid-Normal' life."

First round applicants have been notified of the outcome of their submission with over 80 applicants successful.

The second round submissions were being notified at the time of publishing. Across the two rounds of the grant program, Council received a combined total of over 360 submissions.

"We are thrilled for those businesses as we take a step forward towards living a 'COVID-Normal' life."

The grant program complements the other, non-financial, business recovery measures currently provided by Council.

To view the business support resources available visit:
greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/business



Local business community rallies to support Council's Material Aid Program

Council wishes to provide a heartfelt thanks to the many businesses who have donated food and essential goods to vulnerable residents via Council's Material Aid Program.

Read the stories of just a few of our big hearted businesses across pages six and seven.

The material aid program will continue to support the most vulnerable communities into 2021. As a result, donations are still being sought from both members of the community and businesses until at least February 2021.

Specifically, there is a call out for producers on procuring certain products in bulk at low prices.

If you think your business would be able to help please email: materialaidenquiries@cgd.vic.gov.au



"The business has supported the community by donating more than 130 kgs of frozen dumplings to Council's program and community agencies, distributed in food parcels."

- Tatiana Kuzovova, Granny's Food.

"We have been collecting donations like toilet paper...we fundraised for the second and third batch [of goods] and we're still arranging the fourth batch, so there'll be more to donate."

- Lulu Yin, Yingda



"The community has supported us throughout all these years, so now it's our turn to try and help them as well, for everyone to get through these trying times."

- Alex Alexopoulos, Alexander Produce



Granny's Food sharing the love, one dumpling at a time

Granny's Food specialise in producing Eastern European dumplings, based in Dandenong South. The business has supported the community by donating more than 130 kgs of frozen dumplings to Council's program and community agencies, distributed in food parcels.

Granny's Food normally supplies to groceries and delis, but the COVID-19 lockdown has reduced product sales from small retailers and halted planned developments for the business.

The family-run business is structured as a trust and as a result, doesn't meet the State government's criteria for income support. Tatiana Kuzovova, CEO of Granny's Food explained, "We're not eligible for JobKeeper or JobSeeker, and we haven't been able to get a loan from the bank for three months."

Despite the difficulty faced by her business, Tatiana offered to donate to the Material Aid program when she saw the appeal for donations

in Council's business e-newsletter, Talking Business.

Tatiana can personally relate to the hardships experienced by many in our community. When she first arrived in Australia from Russia, she didn't have any family and social support. Tatiana commented her husband couldn't get a visa to come here. "I was alone with a new baby and not eligible for government support."

The Material Aid program has provided an opportunity for Tatiana to help vulnerable residents and give back to her local community.

grannysfood.com.au

Yingda showcasing how business collaboration can prove invaluable

Yingda is a Springvale-based electronics retailer who has fundraised with 26 partner businesses across Melbourne to support the community through

donations of more than 13,000 face masks, 4,000 toilet paper rolls and over 500 bottles of hand-sanitisers.

"If everyone has a mask, then we can stop the spread [of COVID-19] and everyone can get back to having a normal life," Shane Shen who coordinated donations at Yingda said.

Yingda's director, Lulu Yin, first appealed for donations via an online WeChat network of Melbourne migrant business owners in May. "We reached out to 100 businesses, and at the end there were about 26 who offered help to Greater Dandenong."

"We have been collecting donations like toilet paper...we fundraised for the second and third batch [of goods] and we're still arranging the fourth batch, so there'll be more to donate."

Yingda has delivered invaluable material relief to the program.

Despite many businesses temporarily closed, the business indicated this experience has led to more communication between businesses, meeting other company owners and creating business opportunities.

yingda.com.au

Alexander Produce paying it forward in 2020

When a call to support the Material Aid program was made by Dandenong Market management, Alex Alexopoulos, Chief Executive Officer of Alexander Produce decided to get involved because they had the equipment and transport.

Alexander Produce are based at the Dandenong Market. A family-run fruit and vegetable business who have supported the community by supplying over \$150,000 worth of produce, including donating more than 400kg of high-quality fresh produce to the program since March.

Like many businesses, Alexander Produce has been hit hard financially by the pandemic, particularly since the introduction of COVID-19 travel restrictions.

"Most of our customers are outside the 5km [radius], so we're

running at about 35 per cent of the business at the moment. We finally received JobKeeper last month, but it's still not enough to cover the cost of business. We have customers, restaurants and suppliers, you know, and they're in trouble too," said Alex.

Alex expressed his contribution is "...for the community that has supported us throughout all these years, so now it's our turn to try and help them as well, for everyone to get through these trying times."

www.alexandersfruit.com.au

Dandenong Manufacturers lighting the way forward

Manufacturers in Dandenong South have collaborated to light the first planned “futuristic city” in the United States.

Ezypole and Leadsun have developed smart solar lighting technology and innovative pole design to illuminate the master-planned Epperson Estate in Tampa, Florida. The estate’s developer, Metro Development Group, undertook a worldwide search for almost two years to select the best solar lighting system before finally settling on the Victorian duo.

Leadsun is providing more than 10,000 of its smart solar streetlights run entirely off the grid mounted on Ezypole’s designed and engineered pole. Housing developers have been slow to introduce solar lighting to estates due to several factors, primarily pole spacing constraints and the limited illumination output of solar lights.

Managing Director of Leadsun, Matt Pollard said, “They wanted an off-the-grid street lighting solution that was modern, smart and sustainable. And also because it was in Florida – we had to make sure they were engineered and robust enough to withstand their hurricane season where wind speeds can reach up to 150 miles per hour.”

Ezypole & Leadsun Director, Jeoff Cuberes said this development was very important as its one of their first major international projects.

Ezypole facilitated the design and engineering for the solar light pole mount, developing the unique ORA connector in the process. Preferring to work with local suppliers wherever possible, Ezypole turns to another Dandenong manufacturer, A Bending Co. for the outreach poles in local lighting projects.

Speaking on their preference to collaborate on work with Dandenong



manufacturers, Mr. Cuberes said, “I think it’s important to use fellow SEMMA members as I feel it’s like our own local business network and we can also be recommend for new opportunities.”

While similar lighting with tiltable poles have been installed in a number of parks and reserves around Australia, the Epperson installation could set a new precedent for housing estates in Australia.

Metro Development Group operations Vice President, Kartik Goyani, said, “I would say not only Australian developers but everyone throughout the world should be looking at these. This is what our planet needs and it’s phenomenal technology.”

This story was contributed by South East Melbourne Manufacturing Alliance (SEMMA).

semma.com.au

Sustainability Festival receives a rebrand for the future



Council is delighted to announce the re-branding of the annual Sustainability Festival, which has run for eight years. Council will see the festival re-emerge as the ‘Forever Fest’ – ‘Sustainable living for now and the future.’ This will be a nine day, virtual event running from Saturday 22 May through to Sunday 30 May 2021.

Joining the line-up is Dianne McGrath, who is down to the last 100 remaining candidates worldwide for the 2031 Mars One mission.

The ‘one’ doesn’t just mean it’s the first mission - it also stands for ‘one-way’. Dianne won’t be coming back.

While Mars might be a viable option for a small group of astronauts, most of us here on Earth don’t have the luxury of a Planet B. As such, Council has chosen Dianne to be the festival ambassador throughout the nine days of programming.

Council is seeking expressions of interests from local, sustainability minded businesses to take part in this virtual event. If you are passionate about sustainability and incorporate it into your business please reach out to Council and see how your business can be involved in the Forever Fest.

Further information:

Lily Martyn

Event and Engagement Officer

Email lily.martyn@cgd.vic.gov.au or Phone 8571 1445.



Businesses jump on board Council's Christmas Carols

For the first time since it began 73 years ago and despite the odds faced in 2020, the Greater Dandenong Carols went ahead as a virtual event this year.

The sing-along concert on Friday 11 December was hosted by Denis Walter and featured stars such as Rhonda Burchmore and The Winding Road Project.

Local talents were also showcased including the Greater Dandenong Band, With One Voice Choir, Dandenong Primary School and

former X-Factor Australia finalist Mary Ann Van der Horst.

Although performances were socially distanced and viewers were physically apart, audiences were able to celebrate together with the community and even received a special live greeting from Santa in the comfort of their own homes.

Local food businesses were encouraged to offer discounts on the night to encourage residents to order takeaway and support their local community.

If you missed the Carols the concert is available to watch for a limited time online.

greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/carols

If you'd like to order a takeaway meal to enjoy whilst watching the recorded Carols from the comfort of your home, check out some of our fabulous takeaway options online:

greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/great-bites-open-for-business

Bayliss Road to permanently close

The Victorian Government has announced funding to construct a new track to connect the Cranbourne rail line to a freight and logistics hub in Dandenong South. This will allow for freight to be moved directly between the Port of Melbourne and Dandenong South by rail.

This project requires the permanent closure of Bayliss Road between Westernport Highway and the Bunnings distribution centre. This closure will occur on 31 January 2021.

There may be temporary closures of Bayliss Road before this occurs.

These works will be undertaken as part of the Cranbourne Line Upgrade.

Learn more:

bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/cranbourne-line-upgrade.



Artists Impression of
Post Office Lane view,
credit Hassell Studio
Melbourne

Springvale Boulevard works kick off in 2021

Work will begin early 2021 to transform Springvale Road into a signature boulevard befitting of one of Melbourne's leading cultural destinations.

With more than 20,000 residents and 100,000 visitors from outside Greater Dandenong arriving in the Springvale Activity Centre each year, Council is working to make the area more welcoming for all.

Council's investment in this key strategic project will reinforce the status of Sensational Springvale as one of Melbourne's leading cultural destinations.

The project will enhance the vibrancy and commercial sustainability of the Activity Centre.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with business stakeholders, residents and schools, guiding the design process. Key comments from participants led to the inclusion of wider footpaths for street trading, new seating, improved street lighting, more shade trees and safety enhancements including CCTV.

Council is pleased to announce the construction tender has been awarded to MACA Infrastructure Pty Ltd. MACA is an international contracting group with a compound

and team located in Dandenong South. Labour and materials will predominantly be sourced locally.

Construction will start in early 2021 and is expected to be completed during 2022.

Through the construction process, local businesses will be able to continue trading. Council will work with business operators to ensure disruptions to trading and access will be minimised throughout construction.

Further information including project timelines:

greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/springvaleboulevard

Register to quote on Council projects

Local Government procurement is big business and therefore it's critical to the development of our local economy to get it right. In 2019, Council implemented a new procurement platform, VendorPanel.

VendorPanel provides staff with tools to source for quotes efficiently and importantly it enables better engagement with local suppliers. The public Marketplace identifies suppliers on a map and makes it easy for buyers to be included in Request for Quotes and Proposals.

VendorPanel is completely transparent and demands compliance from buyers, ensuring a fair and consistent process for suppliers.

This calendar year Council has posted over 90 opportunities to the Market via VendorPanel which represent over \$46 million in sourcing value. Of these listed opportunities over \$31 million have been awarded to 146 Suppliers.

Council is encouraging all local businesses to register to receive opportunities to quote on Council projects. Currently, there are 489 local businesses registered on VendorPanel Marketplace.

Registration is simple:

1. Visit info.vendorpanel.com/workwithcityofgreaterdandenong/
2. Click on the 'Register Now' button
3. Use the search bar to find the category best suited to your business
4. Enter your business details
5. Click on the link you receive in your registered email inbox to complete your profile.
6. Once completed, your business profile will be visible to Council buyers searching for the goods or services you supply.

New Look for Dandenong's Little India

It has been a challenging time for retail trade this year due to the impacts of COVID-19 and its unprecedented lockdowns.

The timing of a new marketing plan and complete re-branding of Dandenong's much loved Little India precinct couldn't be more relevant to support the return of street and business activity.

New branding including a colourful suite of graphic promotions for mainstream and social media has been

developed to entice audiences old and new to reconnect with Little India.

New Facebook and Instagram pages called "OUR Little India" have been created for the precinct as a whole, promoting its mix of food and retail establishments and its many cultural attributes. These build on the social media presence that individual traders have built individually over many years.

Time has been used productively to create a fresh call out to lovers of all

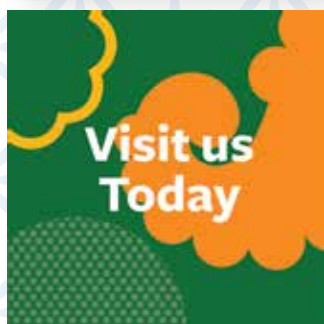
things Indian, enticing them to return to the precinct and shop locally.

The collaborative project brought together precinct traders, trader associations, consultants Next Brand Strategy and Design and Council.

Learn more:

www.facebook.com/ourlittleindiadandenong

www.instagram.com/our_little_india_dandenong



To our business community, take a bow!

Australians are well-known for giving during times of adversity and 2020 is without doubt this country's most challenging year in probably 100 years ... from bushfires to COVID and everything in between!

Despite all the demands on you and your businesses, you have continued your amazing generosity on each and every occasion we have asked - and supported those in need throughout the year.

The recipients of your support are many, including:

2020 Charity Golf Day beneficiaries:

- Taskforce – coffee van
- Cornerstone – kitchen update
- Bushfires Appeal Gippsland

This is IT Schools – equalising education through repurposing laptops for local students

COVID-19:

- Masks – a simple call out and you donated more than 10,000 for those in most need
- Hand sanitiser – you donated, offered your suppliers and provided special rates for our communities

Employment projects – supporting our local jobseekers – giving your time and input to projects and providing expertise and jobs

Your general willingness to put your hands up at any time we have asked reinforces our knowledge that this south east region of Melbourne is one of Australia's greatest business communities.

THANK YOU.

Sandra and all at Team SEBN.



Wishing all a wonderful Christmas and New Year and may 2021 be happy, healthy and prosperous.



City of Greater Dandenong

INDUSTRY GOLF DAY

TAKE A **Swing** FOR CHARITY

Book a date for golf ... all welcome!

The 12th 'Take a Swing for Charity' golf day will again be held at the fabulous Victoria Golf Club on Wednesday, 24 February 2021.

Register your interest - contact sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au



Jayco doubles down on safety as market demand grows

Jayco Australia has seen a 35 per cent increase in sales of its recreational vehicles since the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic. With plans to substantially grow its workforce to keep up with demand, the Dandenong South manufacturer has implemented an innovative 'Smart Badge' technology.

Jayco CEO, Gerry Ryan, said the company had been working for some time to draw up its COVIDSafe Plan to address every "touch point".

"Rick Jamieson, founder of Harry the Hirer, told me about the Smart Badge technology they had developed. The Smart Badge watches alert employees with a 'beep' when they are too physically close to anyone else. In case of any incidents, we can track close contacts and which specific areas are affected," said Mr Ryan.

Jayco employees began wearing the optional technology in October

when the facility re-commenced operations.

Jayco and its subsidiaries are adding 200 jobs, making it the company's biggest workforce to date. Although the Victorian lockdowns brought manufacturing to a halt, the pandemic has also seen the popularity of caravans and motorhomes accelerate for domestic holidays.

In October, Jayco was six months behind production but is projecting its production output will meet sales levels by March 2021.

Jayco's COVIDSafe plan involves more than just the Smart Badge watches.

"Our workforce has staggered start times and lunch breaks, we've installed automatic doors and people bring their own teas and coffees," said Mr Ryan.

"We need to keep the community safe and subsequently our employees, customers and suppliers.



Jayco staff member using the new Smart badge technology

It's important that we all work together and get behind Government to find the best solution that will keep businesses operating."

Mr Ryan has been a proud member of SEBN for a long while. "I didn't have a network in the early days so organisations such as SEBN assisted me in meeting different businesses and having the opportunity to discuss our issues and find solutions."

To read the extended version of this story email sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au

jayco.com.au

South East manufacturing shoots into outer space



Ronson Gears staff members hard at work

Gear manufacturer Ronson Gears has created the first Australian-made precision gear components to go into space after becoming a supplier to Lockheed Martin Space Systems.

According to Ronson's General Manager, Gavin New, the Highett business has signed five contracts with the global security and aerospace company.

"After developing a long-term relationship with Lockheed Martin in Australia, its American-based procurement agents visited

Melbourne in 2018 and liked what they saw," said Mr New.

"It was our customer-centric focus and willingness to do the work that set us apart from the American suppliers Lockheed Martin had previously utilised."

The prototype gears, designed to withstand the extreme conditions of space, enable the solar cell arrays on satellites to move towards the sun to power the satellite.

Joe North, Lockheed Martin Australia Chief Executive, says the agreements with Ronson Gears reinforce the company's commitment to developing Australia's space sector.

"Our collaboration with local research and industry partners like Ronson, demonstrates that Australia has the capabilities here and now to participate in space," says Mr North.

The mining sector is Ronson Gears' core business, with aerospace and defence making up around 15 per cent of the business. It also produces fully assembled gear boxes for the waste and construction (door automation) sectors.

Gavin New has been a part of SEBN's Future of Manufacturing Network since its inception. "It's a great support network with like-minded business leaders. It really forces you to work on the business rather than just in it and highlights how important that is.

"The success we've seen to date at Ronson has been a whole team effort – everyone from engineering, production, quality and senior management," says Mr New of his 37-strong workforce.

To read the extended version of this story email sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au

ronsongears.com.au

An interview with the new leading woman of the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce.

This issue of *Talking Business* we sat down with the newly appointed Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce President, Lisa Moore.

Lisa's day job is Manager Project Services at Chisholm Institute. Interestingly, Lisa is only the third female to hold the President's position in the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce's 73 year history.

Let's meet Lisa.

I want to firstly ask you how you are going? It's been an unpredictable year and it's not over yet.

Like everyone, I have had challenging times personally and professionally. Seeing my family once in the past year has been difficult, due to their distance and COVID related factors, thankfully they are in good health. Similarly, not being able to spend time with friends or colleagues in person, where those joyful, spontaneous interactions occur, has increased my appreciation for the kind and supportive network I have. Connection is at the core of who we are as human beings.

In spite of its challenges, COVID-19 has made my day job at Chisholm Institute far more creative and agile. We have new business models in place, increased flexible working arrangements and new ways of delivering consultancy, training and offshore projects. For some businesses in the local community, being able to pivot so quickly, has created the opportunity for record growth and new expansion pipelines.

However, other businesses have not been so lucky. Many people have lost everything; their life's work and the yield from that sacrifice. Other businesses have struggled, and made heartbreaking decisions. Family stability has been shaken, emotionally and financially, far beyond the reaches of what a

government stimulus package can provide.

It would also be remiss of me to not mention here, that as restrictions start to lift, the long road to financial, emotional and mental health for many has only just begun.

You've recently been appointed President of the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce. Firstly, congratulations, it's great to see a female president, the third in the Chamber's 73 year history.

What made you put your hand up for this role?

Thank you, yes, it's a privilege to be voted in.

Like the attendees at our events, I am passionate about supporting local business. A mentor of mine often says, 'if not me, who? If not now, when?'. We all need to do our part, regardless of what that role is. I have the energy and I will make the time. This is my community by choice, not because I grew up here - I want to help it thrive.

My experience is across private industry, community services and government, though most of my expertise is in people performance (personal and professional), service design and execution. I have applied these skills to diverse platforms such as apprenticeships, local business development,

commercial offshore projects and psychology services.

The Chamber is an opportunity to utilise my leadership skills to bring the best out in others. There is a wealth of information both within the business community, and the Executive Committee, from business leaders who are inspiring, successful and seasoned. It's my role to help elicit and facilitate that expertise for the benefit of local community needs.

What would you like to focus on for the next 12 months in your role as President?

The Chamber is redefining our value offering to the community. We are working on a new strategy to strengthen the way we support the business community to connect, inform and celebrate their achievements. This includes a diversified business model of offerings, which keeps our most successful offerings, strengthens our advocacy, our voice and our position as part of representing the business community.

We will:

- support business to return to COVID normal and assist them to recover
- reconceptualise our Awards Program, to accommodate the changing nature of businesses in our local area



"A mentor of mine often says, 'if not me, who? If not now, when?'. We all need to do our part, regardless of what that role is. I have the energy and I will make the time. This is my community by choice, not because I grew up here - I want to help it thrive."

- continue to ask the business community for feedback and integrate this into our future offerings
- strengthen the voice of our businesses and their needs through advocacy
- pilot new offerings to determine the interest and value to the greater business community
- offer services that are flexible and fit with people's limited time
- improve opportunities for business promotion.

It's no secret, the pandemic has hit our business community immensely. How has the Chamber supported its members?

Here are a few examples...

Recognising the financial hardship of the business community, we offered free digital networking events. This format has been received well, with attendee numbers continuing to grow over the past six months.

We also put the spotlight on local businesses, offering them an opportunity to provide a webinar on their services and products, plus free business promotion to their local community.

Seeing an opportunity to support and advocate Dandenong businesses, I represented the Chamber on the ABC News (in September).

We developed a library of offerings on our You Tube channel for business to access at their leisure, recognising that busy people need to learn flexibly, and at a time that suits them.

New collaborations with Council to bring health experts from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Jobs Precinct and Regions, plus Council emergency management and health officers together to provide the latest information and advice for businesses to prepare for 'COVID-19 normal' operating. These sessions have been fully booked.

Our engagement through social channels has expanded. We are now on Instagram in addition to LinkedIn and Facebook. Our Instagram site also offers business leaders (at any level) the opportunity to share and celebrate their story with our growing community.

We are on the precipice of releasing our new website. It is designed for a better customer experience. It also captures and celebrates past Chamber awards winners, important stories, key events and figures from the Chambers' history – all in celebration of the local business community. Plus, improved promotion of future winners.

Phew, that's a few things. There is more to come in 2021!

It's certainly not easy to do but we are all learning a lot about one another during the series of lockdowns Victoria has faced. What is one positive lesson the Chamber has learnt from the pandemic?

There are many... though, the most important of all, is that like so many businesses during 2020, the Chamber had to pivot, change its business model and adapt to the emerging needs of members.

Although the business community is fighting change fatigue, staff are experiencing potential burnout, and companies are in financial hardship, there are other businesses sharing their financial generosity wherever possible.

We recently raised over \$4,500 for Make a Wish Australia. This is a strong and connected business community who continue to engage, network and give where they can to those in need.

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