

## Central Coast Plateau Chamber of Commerce Chair Report 2020.

The past 12 months has certainly been a challenged time. Good rainfall in the 2019 Spring gave hope for a more normal harvest and all the positive flow on outcomes for local businesses but by the end of the year many crops including avocado and citrus had been affected. So drought and then the threat of fires impacted across our mountain district... and then in March came Covid 19, still affecting our daily lives and business operations today.

An issues letter to PM Scott Morrison in November prior to the bush fires, included concern that current public and private land management has been hampered by restrictions to HR policies within the Native Vegetation Act, and other legislation culminated in an invitation to a Small Business Round Table in Canberra in January chaired by Senator Michaelia Cash and attended by the Prime Minister and Treasurer.

Our first event, the Harvest Farmgate Trail Experience in late November was cancelled due to the danger of bush fire on visitors and traffic management issues. Social media, TV and radio interviews were all used to promote the event and all assisted us to promote the cancellation. We had every indication it would have been a successful event. Dominello's Christmas tree sales did go ahead and was very successful.

The proposed second tour organised for CCC CEO Gary Murphy in November 2019 also had to be postponed due to bush fires. The tour was rescheduled for early October 2020 to focus on stone fruit, avocados, citrus and vegetable production but has again been postponed to the end of the month.

We spoke with Member for Robertson, Lucy Wicks about the electoral boundary which could be simplified by using the cliff face between Kulnura and Yarramalong instead of George Downes Drive. Other issues included the postcode impact on visa entitlements for back packers, importance of maintaining agriculture on the CC Plateau and the Harvest Trail opportunities.

The CCC Pile burning policy did not reflect the community meeting information and needs some work to make it workable for RU1 farmers. Letters sent to question RU1 approval criteria.

**Hawkesbury Harvest Inc** – we have come to the end of the three year discount period. It is time to decide how we want to proceed. Future levy increase for Harvest Trail members will be \$440 per annum, still the best marketing value for businesses seeking agri tourism business opportunities. The website has been upgraded significantly and will offer greater opportunity to plan your business to your needs. Despite the lack of harvest size this year we have been kept on the social media scene capably by Daniela and Euen from Boutique Public Relations. As well articles have appeared in Your Guide Central Coast and Coast will include the Harvest Trail in their map. We have done a podcast with Shine CC promoting agriculture and spoken with the CC Eco and Rural Tourism Study review team.

We have been involved in the CCC Rural Lands Study which instigated a Rural Lands Activity survey. 400 surveys were delivered to farm businesses to enable us to update the agricultural production value and accommodation resources required in our district.

The Spencer community informed the Chamber of their communication, infrastructure and social issues.

And recently I took part in a Right to Farm issues forum called by the newly appointed NSW Agriculture Commissioner, Daryl Quinlivan which was followed up by completing a survey and written issues paper.

We have been able to alert our members to many of the financial stimulus measures instigated by the federal and state governments over the year to assist business through the Covid 19 pandemic.

When I began this report acknowledging all that has impacted on our daily lives in the past 12 months I did not realise how much your Chamber of Commerce had been doing. I would rather be saying....had been achieved, however that is not the way of today's world and for every issue there is a journey.

Our journey continues to be interesting and worth the effort. We are your Chamber of Commerce and we continue to strive for a healthy agricultural and business zone west of the M1 – the Central Coast Plateau.

Lorraine Wilson  
Chairman  
Central Coast Plateau Chamber of Commerce