

It has been an active, productive and frustrating year for your Chamber of Commerce. Keeping Members aware of what is happening continues to be a work in progress mainly because my time and technical limits impact on intent.

Of course maintaining security for agricultural production and allied rural businesses on the Central Coast Plateau continues to be a priority. We are gradually educating politicians and the community that there is a considerable agricultural industry west of the M1 in their backyard.

The CCPCC has hosted a number of guests in the past year including....

- Paula Martin, Regional Director CC Business Chamber & Chairman Frank Sammut,
- Gary Murphy, CEO Central Coast Council who attended our December meeting and who we showcased some of the protective cropping businesses with high employment rates in January. Gary was impressed with what he saw and has asked to visit again to look at citrus, stone fruit and avocado farm businesses. The invitation has been sent. Formerly living in Africa has given Gary a firsthand insight into the importance of agricultural production, especially where transport miles are minimal,
- Councillors Chris Holstein and Richard Mehrtens in July discussed numerous issues including land use, value of agricultural productivity, development of the CC Plateau Harvest Trail and where CCC is going with agri tourism, LEP status and potential impact on farm stalls, and
- Leisl Tesch, Member for Gosford and Sue Dengate Liberal candidate prior to the state elections.

Stormwater Levy Increase

A major win was ensuring RU1 properties west of the M1 would not pay the considerable Stormwater Levy increase planned by Central Coast Council for large properties. Farm Land has been ruled as low impact; unsurprisingly there was strong opposition from farmers who lodged a large number of complaints. CCPCC and NSW Farmers CC Hort. Branch Chairs were invited to be on the IPART panel to put the case for farmers and business west of the M1. The Review stated that...

“The Councils initial proposal did not explicitly state whether it would apply area-based prices to farm land and other rural properties. This caused much concern among farmers and rural property owners west of the M1 Pacific Motorway, who mainly argued:

- *The proposed area-based prices were excessive and unaffordable.*
- *Their properties do not impact on Council infrastructure because, for example, they are largely grazing land or bush land (so storm water is mainly absorbed into the ground, or runs off into creeks and streams), or they have significant on-site water management (dams and tanks) which they have self-funded.*
- *They receive no storm water services from the council so should not pay storm water charges.*

Further noted that “**Council could only levy stormwater charges in declared drainage areas** – *We agree with stakeholders that the Council cannot currently charge for stormwater services in the area west of the M1 freeway, because the Minister has not declared this area a drainage area. We note that the Council stated in its proposal that it intended to apply to the minister to have this area declared a drainage area...*”

CCPCC will be keeping a watch on this issue.

Dog Trap Road Safety

Councillor Chris Holstein assisted in our Dog Trap Road safety issue after the speed limit was sign posted 80kph. Who knew it was previously 100? It remains narrow in parts with deep drains requiring lines and road centre indicators. This has been done although more lines are needed to link centre indicators but we acknowledge the value of corner road lines.

Post Code

We have continued to advocate for post code recognition for agricultural production with the Member for Robertson, Lucy Wicks with past Mayor Jane Smith and CEO Gary Murphy also taking an interest. We emphasise there is no need to change the post code, just recognise agricultural industry exists within urban regions.

Central Coast Plateau Harvest Trail

The CCP Harvest Trail project is progressing slowly. Summer orange and avocado crops were impacted by the weather, however we know that there is a consumer demographic out there wanting to buy direct from farms, when we have a crop to sell, or have a farm tour or pick your own experience. We also get enquiries for accommodation. There is real potential in this project for individual businesses to benefit from the ever expanding social network happening with the help of our dedicated social media team from Hawkesbury Harvest. In addition, as part of the Community Grant from Central Coast Council we have been able to utilise the skills of Daniela Riccio from Boutique Media Relations, Laguna. Daniela has proven to be a dynamo in raising the profile of the CCPHT which has attracted four new Members to our HHI website page this year.

Picking Your Own Oranges is great fun, but not the only option which can bear fruit for farmers on the harvest trail. Social media is used for seasonal open days, others have *by booking only* and others honesty boxes. Your business, your business plan!

NSW Business Chamber Energy Agreement:

Details were sent to all members last year. One CCPCC Board Member has already received significant cost savings. If there are any issues do contact the CC Business Chamber. Paula Martin, Regional Director advised savings of \$500K on the Central Coast and over \$7,373,698M state wide by the end of June. The CC has been the leading region in NSW up to May. There is a possibility of further savings...why not contact the CC Business Chamber and ask the question? Check the quote below....

I thank the Directors of the Central Coast Plateau Chamber of Commerce for their time, efforts and support throughout the year. Teamwork is the way to achieve outcomes and thank you to our Members for your continued support.

CCPCC Membership entitles you to access all the Regional, State and National benefits. Check the website. Please tell me if you do not receive the State or Regional Updates.

Lorraine Wilson

Chairman

Central Coast Plateau Chamber of Commerce