



## President's report 2020

Looking back over the last twelve months it has been one of fantastic highs but also devastating lows not just for Bega and the Valley but also indeed the whole Country. Throughout this time your executive has been very active not only striving to increase business activity in Bega but also to provide as much help and advocacy as we can for those struggling in our community as a result of the Bushfires and now Covid 19.

Following last year's annual meeting the newly elected executive jumped straight into a review of the Chambers vision statement, our mission and the structure required to achieve this vision. The result is a simple but clear document setting our direction for the coming years with a level of detail that allows for more member engagement.

The biggest highlight for the year was our Customer Service awards held in November. After months of customer service training, nominations from the public and mystery judging it was great to come together to celebrate the wonderful and diverse business community we have in this town. I am sure you would agree it was a fantastic night. A huge thank you to Bega Cheese for coming on board as our major sponsor and also the terrific events committee that put in hours and hours of work to make it all happen. It is unfortunate that despite much planning already done we have been forced to postpone this year's event due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Another great achievement this year has been the launch of our new website. If you haven't already checked it out it is [www.begachamber.com.au](http://www.begachamber.com.au) This site gives us the ability to keep everyone informed of our activities and we will continue to expand this site and add more features to it. I would like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work Tim Whittaker has put into this project.

The main role that your Chamber is tasked with is to advocate members views on issues affecting our town and in the last year we have done that in a number of areas. We have been engaged with Bega Valley Shire Council on a few issues including the Commercial Land Strategy; their Jobs and Skills Project; the future of Australia day in Bega as well as multiple meetings around Bushfire recovery and now Covid. We appreciate the new level of interaction we are enjoying with Council largely through Daniel Murphy and his team and

while we don't always agree on some issues it is good to have our voice heard and be able to contribute to the decision-making process.

We have also been a strong advocate with both the state and federal Governments. Earlier this year we participated in bushfire roundtable meetings in Canberra one hosted by the Prime Minister where we were given the opportunity to highlight the devastation caused by the bushfires and discuss possible help that could be provided. The other, held by the Business Council of Australia and chaired by former Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove. This meeting laid the platform for a lot of the practical help that has been provided to hundreds of businesses in the wake of the bushfires.

We have continued to send out relevant information via email as this has come through and if you are not receiving these then please update you email address before leaving tonight.

Sadly, because of the Covid 19 situation we have not been able to run major retail activities this year. The plan was for a camping gear giveaway for Easter, followed by another promo in Spring.

Hopefully, we can still run an event in the lead up to Christmas which will include a busking competition with the finalist to play on Australia day next January.

We would also like to acknowledge the tremendous work of Mia Maze and the Innovation Hub. Your Chamber has given financial assistance over two years to see this venture get off the ground and what great results it is achieving particularly for new starts ups in the area but also for existing businesses to grow and improve. We really hope that funding is forthcoming to continue with the Hub for many years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank the current members of the executive for their time and expertise that they bring to the Chamber for the benefit of this community and also Steve Bartlett our admin assistant.

I am looking forward to the next year and continuing to keep Bega the centre and economic driver of the Bega Valley.

John Watkin  
President