

Yarra City Council

Business Advisory Group



Minutes

Special Meeting No. 5 – 2021

Date: Wednesday 10 November 2021

Time: 8.00am – 10.00am

Location: Richmond Town Hall and online via Microsoft

Teams

vibrant

exciting

inclusive

Attendance:

First Name	Initial	Business Name
Present		
Cr Herschel Landes	HL	Yarra Councillor (Chair)
Cr Edward Crossland	EC	Yarra Councillor
Mark Ryan	MR	Eureka Coffee/Growers Espresso
Mark Schiffer	MS	Blick Creative
Robyn Madeley	RM	Victoria Gardens Shopping Centre
Shini Pararajasingham	SP	Off the Kerb Gallery
Trang Du	TD	Two Square Pegs
Jennifer Jones	JJ	Ikea
Arthur Keramitsis	AK	Keramitsis & Co
Kevin Tjangdjaja	KT	Makmur
Apologies		
Guests		
Joel Backwell	JB	Victorian Government Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
Maggie Baron	MB	Victorian Government Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
Simon Osborne	SO	Yarra Council – Economic Development
Joy Saunders	JS	Yarra Council – Economic Development
Will Anderson	WA	Yarra Council – Economic Development
Shelley Woolcock	SW	Yarra Council – Economic Development

		Action/Up date
	Acknowledgement of Country (Cr Landes)	
1.	Declarations of conflict of interest	

		Action/Up date
	<p>No conflicts of interest were declared.</p> <p>Apologies</p> <p>Nil</p>	
2.	<p>Actions arising from previous meeting & adoption of minutes</p> <p>Minutes adopted</p>	
3.	<p>General business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome from Simon Osborne to a special, fifth Business Advisory Group meeting for 2021 - Cr Landes – who would like to kick off? How are things with your businesses? <p>RM – strong opening at Victoria Gardens. COVIDSafe Marshals.</p> <p>MS – there has been a big focus on retail and hospitality. But COVID has also negatively impacted B2B businesses that don't rely on foot traffic. Would like to see more from council and government to support these businesses in Yarra.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to get staff. We've had ads on Seek, overseas, hit and miss what we're getting back. • Improved criteria with lending and receiving funds • Incentives or benefits for e-marketing, websites. We spent a lot of money on google advertising, in Qld and NSW which we've never done before. • Growth, employment <p>JJ – click and collect at Ikea worked really well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 10% of Ikea customers traveled to store via foot, rather than driving (like at our other stores). Vic Gardens is very accessible via tram and shows the importance of active transport in Yarra. • Supply/shipping situation is a challenge. Consumers are willing to come out, shop, interact, but we are nervous about the new year... shelves are already looking a bit bare in a variety of shops. • Being COVIDSafe was stressful – checking QR codes, vaccination requirements, etc. wasn't very clear. High levels of aggression with customers not wearing masks. Expecting a high level of frustration when customers need to provide proof of vaccination. • Our restaurant business remains closed. Our food operation doesn't fit in the category of cafe/restaurant. More a cafeteria style. This is a blind spot in the Vic Gov roadmap and COVIDSafe settings. • We've had some positive cases at the store. This used to result in a prompt call from DoH. Now, we receive nothing. Challenging, process is unclear and disappointing. • Recruitment/employment – 40-50 positions at the moment. Relied on international students and we're missing that on our staff and customers. • We're a high-volume retailer. Not selling as much volume when we were closed. We have significant stock we need to get in to the building and protective over stock we have available. Supply is looking patchy for some products. Availability from suppliers. • Absenteeism is not as high as anticipated which is an unexpected highlight. • Covid affects our bottom line 100% - cleaning staff, security staff, communications, payment for covid testing... it is a challenge from a cost perspective. <p>SP - My greatest concern is the quarantine requirements. If I test positive is it 7 days or 14 days? Who can cover for me and my business?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are a gallery and an event space. I waited one week before opening. Lots of anxiety from customers, people without smart phones, bringing ID and proof of vaccination - HR – do you see yourself as a vulnerable trader? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o SP – Yes <p>KT - We are a food production business in Richmond supplying to major retailers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We've had two positive Covid cases in the factory recently. Expensive for a covid safe deep clean \$5-6k. I can see how businesses struggle to pay this. DoH should consider if this is sustainable for businesses moving forward. 	

		Action/Up date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR – what are your thoughts on testing kits? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o KT – We know there are some factories looking at covid testing kits to get results within 24 hours. However, is quite expensive (two kits for \$25). What about false negative results? <p>MS – we had a covid positive child. Dr said child didn't need a day 13 test for a neg result, just needs to complete 14 day quarantine.</p> <p>TD - I run a social enterprise. Events spaces are at a premium. Lots of protocol around how to use spaces – checking vax certificates, how many people allowed, how much space to give. You end up policing COVIDSafety as well as being an event organiser.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship building is really important with our business. Lots of ppl we work with are in social housing and already have a distrust of police, government and authority. It is hard to build relationships with these people when they see you as enforcing COVIDSafety requirements. - We're interested in running hybrid events – in person and online. It's not cheap and need to consider this when booking event spaces. - Recruitment – we're working with a number of organisations. 	
4.	Simon – update on Yarra's successful grant applications	
5.	<p>Joy – Regulatory Reform Incentive Fund (RRIF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To support economic recovery and job creation. - Yarra submitted three applications. All applications were successful totalling \$2.4m <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of online portal for town planning at Yarra - Develop guidelines and factsheets for businesses to navigate council permit requirements (joint project with Moreland, Hobsons Bay, Stonnington and Greater Shepparton) - How to activate vacant properties (joint project with Port Phillip) <p>HL – a Bridge Road business recently paid \$10k and waited 6 months for a planning permit for new signage. Will these projects help?</p> <p>JS – yes. But there are other reasons why a planning permit may take longer to be processed.</p> <p>MS– these grants are important for businesses in precincts, but these grants provide nothing for B2B businesses like mine without a shopfront. This is an area missed by council and government. I would like to see investment in business services. We don't need outdoor dining and people coming in to our business, but we still need support.</p>	
6.	<p>Joel Backwell – DJPR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yarra received the most state gov grant funding than any other LGA (excl. City of Melbourne) – well done - To SP: There's a really comprehensive Q&A on the coronavirus website about quarantine periods and checking ID for vaccination - What else is needed to accelerate economic recovery in the short term? (6 months). - 2022 will be a strong year of growth – domestic visitors, backpackers and international students. This is short term recovery, not long-term economic growth. 	
8.	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>HL – thank you SP and AK for your service to the Business Advisory Group.</p> <p>Merry Christmas and see you in 2022.</p>	
	Meeting closed 1003	