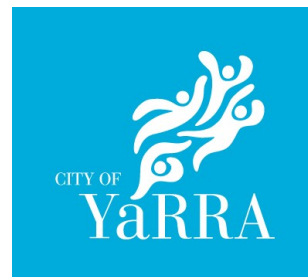


Yarra City Council
Business Advisory Group
Meeting minutes



Meeting number 1 of 4 – 2022

Date: Thursday 3 March 2022

Time: 8am to 10am

Location: Perry's: A Refreshment Club, 314 Smith Street, Collingwood

Attendance:

| First Name | Initial | Business Name |
|---------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Present | | |
| Cr Herschel Landes | HL | Yarra Councillor (Chair) |
| Cr Edward Crossland | EC | Yarra Councillor |
| Matthew Kovacs | MK | Ventia |
| Daine Singer | DS | Daine Singer Gallery |
| Guido Melo | GM | Melko |
| Mark Schiffer | MS | Blick Creative |
| Sophie Travers | ST | Collingwood Yards |
| Robyn Madeley | RM | Victoria Gardens Shopping Centre |
| Jeremy Ellis | JE | LaunchPad |
| Freya Berwick | FB | Sense of Self |
| Mary Minas | MM | Sense of Self |
| Shane Hryhorec | SH | Push Mobility |
| Kevin Cahya | KC | Makmur Enterprises |
| Trang Du | TD | Two Square Pegs |
| Jane Stewart | JS | Sustain Ability International |
| Paula Glynn | PG | PixelStorm |
| Apologies | | |
| Mark Ryan | MR | Eureka Coffee/Growers Espresso |
| Guest | | |
| Esther Kennedy | EK | Yarra Council |
| Nicole Tattersall | NT | Yarra Council |
| Sara Haley | SH | Yarra Council |
| Shelley Woolcock | SW | Yarra Council |
| Simon Osborne | SO | Yarra Council |
| Will Anderson | WA | Yarra Council |

| | Action/Update |
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| <p>1. Acknowledgement of Country</p> <p>Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations here today—and to their Elders past, present and future.”</p> | |
| <p>1. Declaration of conflict of interest</p> <p>No conflicts of interest were declared.</p> | |
| <p>2. Actions arising from previous meeting and adoption of minutes</p> <p>Minutes adopted</p> | |
| <p>3. Welcome from Kaidee at Perry’s: A Refreshment Club</p> | |
| <p>4. Welcome to new members and introductions</p> <p>Herschel</p> <p>Matthew Kovacs – Ventia. Design and construct the nbn. Lives in Richmond. Yarra resident 14yrs. Interested in community.</p> <p>Daine – Daine Singer Gallery. 3 years Moor St Fitzroy. Represent a group of artists. Physical gallery</p> <p>Guido – womenswear and jewelry from South America. Brunswick Street. 6 years on Bridge Road. In Yarra since 2011.</p> <p>Sara – small business ambassador. Also runs a catering business.</p> <p>Shelley – team leader of small biz ambassadors</p> <p>Mark Schiffer – blick creative. Peel Street. NFP, govt, community. Graphic design, communications.</p> <p>Sophie. CEO Collingwood Yards. Precinct opened in April 2021. Creative businesses in the precinct.</p> <p>Robyn – centre manager Victoria Gardens Shopping Centre. Leasing, marketing, admin</p> <p>Esther Kennedy – Eco Dev project officer</p> <p>Jeremy – LaunchPad. Pre-covid 70 businesses with support and facilities. Seeing small and medium businesses. Has new business selling soundproof meeting rooms.</p> <p>Simon – Coordinator Eco Dev</p> <p>Nicole – small business ambassador</p> <p>Freya and Mary – Sense of Self is a day spa and bathhouse. In the face of everything going online, community spaces are activated and interested</p> <p>Shane – Accessible Beaches Australia (charity). Push Mobility. Making things more inclusive for people. Co work company in South Australia.</p> <p>Kevin – director at Makmur Enterprises. Manufacture foods in Richmond</p> <p>Trang – social enterprise 2 square pegs. Under represented and under estimated ppl who want to start an enterprise. Increasing diversity in Yarra. Working on a project to support women in the estates and surrounding areas to start a</p> <p>Jane – Sustain Ability International. Training around environment and safety.</p> <p>Paula – PixelStorm. Digital marketing company in Cremorne. Work with council and community. Helping putting business online. Helping people get their time back. Helping with ecommerce, google ads, SEO. Likes contributing to council and change. Cremorne is changing and growing and being a part of that.</p> | |
| <p>5. Yarra Council Economic Development update – audits and employment</p> <p>Presentation from Shelley Woolcock</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herschel – what were the top 10 q’s from the 900+ businesses? Shelley answers: | |

| | Action/Update |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment ○ Not enough time/notice from Fed/State governments with restrictions ○ Accessing stock from overseas ○ Inability to anticipate changes ○ Customers not complying with restrictions/requirements ○ Retaining staff –people are moving away from metro Melbourne ○ It's mixed – some businesses are thriving while some others suffer. Lifestyle business e.g. bicycle shops cannot keep up with demand ○ Local response to local issues – supply chain issues are greater than local. We're focusing on issues we can make a difference with ● Matthew – what are the% reductions/increases over years with vacancies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shelley answers with stats from the presentation ○ Matthew – what is acceptable? Benchmark? ○ Simon – 15% is understood globally as acceptable. Healthy change ● Guido – City of Melbourne subsidises rent for shopkeepers. 3mo, 6mo. Is Yarra going do to this? Can Yarra Council please consider this? A vacant shop is the enemy of a thriving shop. ● Daine – what have rent reductions been? It doesn't feel like rents have been going down. ● Simon – we've seen a lot more home-based businesses and shared tenancies. ● Mark – we focus a lot on retail precincts and ground floor, but there are professional services that aren't on the ground floor of precincts ● Jeremy – Yarra has most co-working spaces per area in Australia. Massive shift from CBD to areas like Yarra. Offices are downsizing, going hybrid. We're seeing the same thing ● Shane – how is the audit data collected? How broad is it? Has there been any study in the blockers of people moving to Yarra to operate businesses? There are reasons why people are moving to different areas. Our business moved to Hoddle Street and had issues and blockers with signage and planning permits and signage companies didn't want to work with us because of Yarra planning department. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Simon – data is collected on foot. We walk the streets and note the vacancies and tenancies. There are different precincts in Yarra, each individual. We understand the challenges businesses have in terms of permits ○ Shane – when you visit businesses are you collecting accessibility data? There is often a physical step-up to enter ○ Trang – one of the projects coming is a woman who has an accessibility app ● Herschel – heritage vs access. Dereliction. I had a heritage building which has now become a creative space. ● Paula – businesses in Swan Street. I'm often faced with unable to enter 50% of businesses because of a walking impairment. I ask them 'has anything been done to fix it?' Council tells them 'you cannot change the front of the shop'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shane seconds this. 20% of the population has a disability. Improving accessibility increases your revenue | |
| <p>6. General business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Herschel – a business added a mezzanine, triggered a planning permit for car parking reduction. Changing anything with heritage building. Changing windows of a building – triggers planning permit for demolition. Moving forward how about a list of 'as of right' changes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jeremy – I think there's something already like this. You can get a planning permit for signage. And we applied for this. ○ Daine – 4 month with no signage. Yarra planning dept is quite difficult for businesses to deal with. ○ Freya – the planning scheme and time and delays. We paid 6mo of rent waiting for responses from Yarra Council even when we had already done the work. | |

- Matthew – you have businesses doing the right thing and trying really hard. I know people who just go out in the dead of night to do what they need to do.
- Daine – next time we're just putting a sign up and waiting for Yarra Council to fine us.
- Cr Crossland – this conversation is fantastic. Let's do a workshop next meeting about this.
- Sophie – Rates is an issues. We are NFP landlords. We're advised to pass rates charges onto our tenants
 - Jeremy- Cremorne rates have increased tenfold in the past few years
 - Herschel - Is that making you think about leaving?
 - Jeremy - We receive support from lots of places other than Yarra Council
 - Simon – we know that creatives love the area but are being priced out
 - Daine – we know that the identity of Yarra is creative, but artists and producers aren't here anymore. It's too expensive.
 - Sophie – and some of these are NFP
- Shane – A cafe in 2018 wanted to install a ramp, heritage issues, planning permit... nothing ever eventuated.
- People don't say great things about Yarra planning dept. other businesses hear these stories and don't even bother.
- Representation in these committees – can we have more councillors and the mayor at the Business Advisor Group? I attended a Disability Advisory Group meeting and all councillors were apologies.
- What are some actions that can be put in place?
 - Herschel – thank you Shane. I would encourage you to attend a council meeting to voice your concerns in the chamber. These conversations about steps and doorways have been occurring for a long time and nothing has been done.
 - Simon – Shane your comments will be in minutes and delegates report and sent to all councillors. Everything mentioned here goes to the highest level at council. BAG has a lot of weight
- Guido – diversity is important
- Mark – if Yarra pioneers accessibility that will be something we become known for
- Paula – streets are narrow. Yarra has a lot of heritage. This is a real barrier to access and inclusion. We would need Yarra-specific solutions
- Sophie – businesses being nomadic... the role of business in placemaking. Most businesses at Collingwood Yards are closely linked to the businesses around them. Picking up and moving isn't an option for us.
- Robyn – my question or challenge is – Yarra has a unique story, sense of place, what can we do to protect our place and encourage businesses to move here, and not move to CBD. There is huge incentive from Lord Mayor Sally Capp to move to CBD (workers and businesses). Protect our unique precincts and businesses. It's different for a shopping centre. Incubator spaces.
- Jeremy – I have interacted with 100s of business over the past years. March is the first month people are seriously thinking about coming back into the office. We feel there is going to be a shift back to the office. At the moment businesses are trying experiments with trying 2-3 days in the office/from home. Yarra Council needs to look forward about what's going to happen and how they can support this. International influx is imminent. There is going to be a significant turn back to the office. Car parking is at a premium – people don't want to catch public transport.
- Trang – business incubation. We talked about diversity being a strong point of City of Yarra. When I talk with diverse ppl who want to start businesses. Large African community in Yarra. I'm interested in starting a hairdresser but rents are too high in Yarra so they move to Footscray or Preston. We need to find ways for these people to open shops in Yarra. Before they have a customer base and income before they can afford rent.
- Herschel – chicken and egg – can't have a location without money, but don't have money without a location/business/customers
- Jane – another element is making sure businesses are sustainable and ethical.

| | Action/Update |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary – planning is a huge frustration for us. Within the planning process, the work was completed in 3 months, but our application was waiting on someone’s desk for 4mo waiting for a signature. We have this in writing in an email! Regulatory approval. And parking too. • Freya – we understand there are regulations to be met. Is there anything about making it fast for business? We’re not asking for concessions to the code and the scheme. Make it easier for business. • Simon – Service Victoria are working on an app/portal for planning applications. Same platform for all councils and application. Currently being used in NSW. • Shane – public bathrooms in Yarra, people with disabilities, we need a ‘changing places’ bathroom in Yarra (I don’t think there is one?). This is something that has come out of covid. • Robyn – parking, clean facilities, then the product (shopping) comes next. You need to get those right. • Herschel summarises general business: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversity data (sexuality, gender, race, ability, etc.) ○ Diversity of business type ○ Disability data – increasing ○ Reputation of Yarra ○ Inclusion ○ Planning (fast track, reform) ○ Affordability/incentives (can be short term) to kickstart business and give them a helping hand (incubation) ○ Shift from retail trade to knowledge-based businesses • Mark – lets workshop our strengths and positives (seconded by Robyn and Guido). • Trang plugs her mentoring program. • Shane – an idea for this group to put a presentation together for the next council meeting | |
| <p>7. Closing</p> <p>Meeting closed.</p> | |