



Welcome everyone – fellow board members, Bowen Tourism and Business financial members and valued supporters – and thank you for attending the Bowen Tourism and Business 2019 AGM.

12 months ago, I was truly humbled and honoured to be elected to serve as Chair of BTB and to continue to work closely with our board, staff and volunteers.

To our financial members from both the tourism and non-tourism sectors, thank you for your continued support. Your contribution is vital in the continued operation of our Information Centre and Booth, and ongoing promotion of Bowen and the Whitsundays region to our visitors. As we are all aware, tourism is everybody's business, a strong tourism and events sector in our town directly supports and benefits all local businesses.

Thank you to the Whitsunday Regional Council for continuing to support our organization both financially and administratively. The commitment shown by the Mayor, Councilors and staff for Bowen Tourism and Business is highly valued and we look forward to continuing this relationship into 2020.

Thank-you to Tash Wheeler and the Tourism Whitsundays team, for continuing to work closely with our board, staff and volunteers in both the operation of the Information Centre and in promoting Bowen and our members. We have been proud to work in conjunction with Tourism Whitsundays and witness the strengthening of our relationship for the benefit of Bowen and the entire region.

To our BTB Staff and Volunteers,

The success of Bowen Tourism and Business are directly attributed to our incredible team of staff and volunteers. The tireless efforts of our team have ensured the ongoing, outstanding management of our Visitor Information Centre and Booth, the continual engagement with our members

and Tourism Whitsundays, and the promotion of Bowen and the Whitsunday region.

While 2019 was not without challenges, I am constantly impressed by the teamwork evident in our staff and volunteers to overcome obstacles and to continue to welcome our visitors with enthusiasm and local expertise. Each of you bring unique qualities to the organization that are vital to its success.

Christin, your attention to detail, intimate understanding of BTB and the operation of the Information Centre and Booth and proficiency in the administration requirements have once again been crucial to BTB's success. This year we truly saw you shine through the enormous task of coordinating the QICA conference and the amazing event you delivered. The support and leadership you provide to the team is exceptional. Thank you once again for your dedication to BTB and your positive and professional approach to your role.

Mary, over the past twelve months we have watched you blossom in this role and apply passion and creativity to the promotion of Bowen and our members. The position of sales and marketing coordinator is enormous, but you have successfully delivered across the multitude of tasks, and some new ones we didn't foresee! Your presentations at the Whitsunday Tourism Exchange, Whitsunday East Coast Roadshow, and at various other events and exhibitions have been well-considered, engaging and delivered professionally. Your eye for beauty has continued to impress our visitors across our digital platforms, and your devotion to the team and our visitors' experiences much appreciated. Thank you for your passion and your efforts over the past 12 months.

To our three sales consultants, Ellie, Ashleigh and Glenn. Thank you for your continued efforts in ensuring each and every one of our visitors is greeted warmly and learns all about the experiences on offer here in Bowen, across the Whitsundays and along the Queensland coast. All of you bring distinctive talents to the role and we have witnessed each of you use these talents to as

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part of a cohesive team driven to increase sales and deliver excellent visitor services.

Our four junior team members, Madison, Zeline, Katie and Shelby, have also continued to provide support on the weekends to our staff and volunteers. Shelby, in particular, has stepped up to assisting our staff during the busy season this year and has been a huge asset to the organization. Thank you to each of you for your valuable contribution.

Thank you to our incredible team of volunteers. Our team of 19 volunteers are absolutely crucial to the success of BTB as an organization, and in the operation of the Information Centre and Booth. Each week our volunteers greet hundreds of visitors with a passion for Bowen and our region, excelling in the delivery of visitor information and customer service. The dedication our volunteers show to the promotion of our region and the operation of our organization simply cannot be understated. Thank you to each of you for your commitment, warm smiles and friendship with our team, and your devotion in continuing to support BTB.

To the BTB Board – Vice-chair Jonathan Freeman, Treasurer Trisha O'Sing, Jackie Burling, Craig Witts, John Henderson, Faraday Rosenberg and Emily Harvey – thank you for your dedication to BTB, your support, guidance and passion for our organization has been invaluable. Mary Gordon once again joined our board to represent the Bowen Chamber of Commerce and continued to provide insight into the state of local business in Bowen, thank you Mary.

This evening four of our 2019 board members will say farewell to BTB. I'd like to thank each of you for your commitment and incredibly valuable contribution to this organization. I know that you will all continue to be amazing ambassadors for Bowen and BTB, wherever your next adventures take you.

Trisha O'Sing, as treasurer for BTB you brought business expertise and passion for Bowen that we are all grateful for. Your understanding in managing budgets, operating a retail space and understanding customers and

customer service has been instrumental in guiding our board and staff. Thank you for your contribution and we wish you all the best with your beautiful new baby, Kensley, and your future endeavours.

Craig Witts, we trust that your long-awaited journey around Australia is proving to be as wonderful as your guests once described. Your passion for the drive market and our local caravan parks was certainly evident at all of our board meetings. Thank you for the energy you brought to our meetings and your considered approach to boosting visitor numbers to our region.

Faraday Rosenberg, congratulations on your new position with Bowen Physiotherapy, and, of course, the chance to continue to bring yoga to Bowen locals. Over the past 12 months you have brought real insight to our board with your both your experience in managing yoga retreats, and your clarity of thought and understanding of the issues faced by BTB and our community. Thank you for your dedication to BTB, I know we can count on your support into the future.

Jonathan Freeman, former chairman and current vice-chair. When you were elected as BTB chairman 4 years ago, in 2015, I had just met you, and was attempting to make myself useful in your packing shed and learn something in the process! Four years on and I have learnt an incredible amount, thanks to your dedication, innovative approach and ability to see opportunities where others may not. Personally, you have been a fantastic mentor and friend, empowering me with both the skills and confidence to take on challenges and to lead, thank you. For BTB you have applied your skills to steer the organization in a new direction that has brought great success and exceptional outcomes for our members and our region. On behalf of our board, staff and volunteers, thank you for your commitment to BTB, Bowen and the Whitsundays.

As we say farewell to four board members, I'd now like to welcome Alexander Pyke, Amanda Brockbank, Chloe Bauer, and Kyli McCrae to the Bowen Tourism and Business Committee for the remainder of 2019 and into

2020. We are all looking forward to working with you and welcoming in another successful year for our organization.

2018 – 2019 Financial Overview

In the 2018 /19 Financial Year we welcomed 39,841 visitors at the Big Mango Information Centre and Little Mango Booth. While these numbers are a little lower than the previous financial year, each of our visitors was greeted warmly by our staff and volunteers and left with a wealth of knowledge about our region. Customer satisfaction ranked incredibly well with 80% of visitors leaving a 5/5 rating across several categories. Our team also worked hard to increase our retail range, resulting in an increase in spend per customer. In conjunction with bookings in the Centres and online, sales make up 45% of our annual income.

In 2018/19 we had 214 financial members from Bowen, the Whitsunday Region and along the Queensland Coast, contributing 8.2% of our income. As a membership-based organization, the contribution made by our members is crucial to our ability to operate, welcome our visitors and promote our destination. Thank you all once again for your continued support.

The Whitsunday Regional Council continued to support BTB financially in 2018/19, contributing 30% of our annual income. Lastly, advertising and signage generates over 16% of our income. As a result, Bowen Tourism and Business continues to remain financially secure and very positive about our future.

Promoting Bowen and the Whitsundays

Our partnership with Tourism Whitsundays has continued to grow over the past twelve months, bringing great opportunities to BTB and Bowen. Collaboration between our organisations has resulted in over \$250,000 of PR value for Bowen. From Today Show weather crosses to the Queensland Weekender 'Walk to the Lighthouse' feature, digital influencers to travel magazine articles, this publicity is invaluable to both BTB and the Bowen community. Thank you to CEO Tash Wheeler and her

team for the dedication, support and resources you have allocated in promoting our part of the region.

Our digital presence also continues to soar. The revised Bowen Tourism website attracted more than 38,000 new visitors over the last financial year, with page views increasing by 47%. On Facebook our reach increased by 17%, while Instagram engagement was up 135%. Congratulations to our staff for continuing to create and source new content for these platforms, our Bowen imagery is truly spectacular and certainly well-received by many potential visitors.

Finally, our team also attended the following events to promote Bowen as the perfect holiday destination:

- Whitsundays Tourism Exchange – promoting Bowen as a potential day trip option for tours and fantastic holiday destination to product managers
- Participation in Whitsundays East Coast Roadshow – increasing awareness of Bowen as a holiday destination to travel agents
- 5 PR famils covering a broad audience
- Mackay Caravan and Camping Expo

2019 Events & Projects

As we are all aware, events offer an incredible opportunity to bring visitors into the region, extend their length of stay and increase local expenditure. This is just one of the ways tourism becomes everybody's business! The team at BTB consciously support every event in Bowen, Collinsville and the Whitsundays through online promotion and attendance where possible – there's always a keen volunteer to man Kenny. In 2019, however, there were a few key events we were directly involved in.

Superboats 2019

Once again we helped with the co-ordination of Superboats event. The event saw strong visitation and continues to provide wide exposure for Bowen and entertainment for all. The Superboat committee is currently planning the 2020 event and we look forward to assisting in the next year.

Walk to the Lighthouse 2019

Building on the success of the 2018 event, this year's Walk to the Lighthouse once again exceeded all expectations. Conscious of the need to revise and improve the land event and look at additional promotion channels, BTB successfully secured funding from Whitsunday Regional Council to fund marketing, infrastructure, security, traffic and crowd management and music. Our partnership with Tourism Whitsundays proved crucial with in-kind sponsorship and marketing reach. The Grand View Hotel once again came on board to work with the Seagulls Junior Rugby League club to run the bar and organize live music. We were joined on the day by Meraki Whitsundays, Coral's City 2 Country, Bowen Outdoor Camping and Fishing, the VMR and more to entertain our visitors. BIH kindly provided infrastructure at a reduced cost.

The results were simply amazing. Between 3500 and 4000 attended the Walk to the Lighthouse, many travelling from across the state and country for this unique experience. Accommodation across Bowen filled, with most operators reporting 80% occupancy or higher.

Leave No Footprints Education Program

In early 2019, BTB was approached by the Bowen Burdekin Local Marine Advisory Committee to be the key delivery partner in the Leave No Footprints program. Funded by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, the program established a group of volunteers to assist walkers on the day and to provide education on the local sea life. The program also funded the construction of a sign at Dalrymple Point encouraging visitors to be aware of their impact during the walk, and brochures that could be distributed at Information Centres in Bowen and the Burdekin. We were fortunate to engage with the Bowen State High School reef guardian program and invite the students to assist with research for the project. Now in its final stages, the Leave No Footprints program demonstrated the way collaboration between community groups could make a real impact on the preservation of our environment.

Underwater Sculptures Display

In early June our BTB team worked with Tourism Whitsundays and Reef Ecologic to create a temporary art display featuring 2 of the underwater sculptures right next to the Big Mango. These sculptures were joined by the smaller research sculptures, creating a beautiful outdoor exhibition. What an incredible success! The sculptures provided both fantastic selfie opportunities for our visitors, and a chance to engage with our staff on this exciting project in our region.

Bookeasy QICA 2019 Conference

Just last week BTB hosted the 2019 Bookeasy QICA conference. In October 2018 the conference location was announced following our successful submission, and work began immediately to establish conference venues, local tours and the awards event. Congratulations to Christin and Mary on the very successful delivery of this conference. The planning involved was immense, and the outcome was brilliant. I was lucky enough to attend the welcome function and awards evening and I am truly overwhelmed with the success and the impact made on our fellow VIC operators.

2019 Tourism Awards

Coming up this weekend is the annual Whitsunday Tourism Awards, in which BTB has three entries. This will be followed closely by the Queensland Tourism Awards in November, with another two entries. Good luck to our team!

VIC Upgrade

Lastly, and possibly the one we're most excited about – the Big Mango Information Centre will be undergoing a refurbishment in early 2020. While retaining the current floor plan, the centre will benefit from several structure upgrades, fitout and a coat of paint. The construction will take approximately six weeks to complete, during which time we will operate as normal from a demountable building beside the Big Mango.

Into 2020

Just last month the new Whitsundays brand was launched, capturing the essence and diversity of our whole region. More than just a logo, the new brand describes who we are, from the outback to the islands, the mango farms to the Great Barrier Reef. 2020 will be the opportunity to unite our region through our brand, and what better place to start than in our Information Centres. We see the coming year filled with opportunities to work further in collaboration with our stakeholders and members to deliver more for Bowen and the Whitsundays. We also see 2020 as the year the diversity of events drive visitation to all corners of the region, the year new experiences extend nights spent in region, and the year global awareness of the exclusive beauty we have on offer exceeds all expectations.

Bowen is the Heart of Secluded Beaches, the Heart of Fringing Reef, the Heart of Agriculture, and of course the Heart of Mangoes, and we live and breathe the Heart of it All.

Finally – thank-you again to all the supporters of BTB – and we look forward to remaining relevant and positive to the Bowen, Collinsville and the Whitsunday communities in 2020.

Jenn Honnery

Chairman BTB

24/10/19