

Busy time for the Chamber

The second half of the year is where things seem to get busy, and I wanted to take the opportunity to thank the hard-working members of the Chamber committee.

Each one manages their own business and families, yet finds it in themselves to give back to the community by volunteering their time to be part of the Chamber committee.

These amazing people manage the finances, or plan and run the events like the breakfasts and the upcoming Business Excellence Awards.

They manage our memberships and our relationships with all levels of government, along with a raft of other behind the scenes work, all focused on creating the best environment for our local businesses to thrive.

Chamber exists purely on the efforts of our volunteer committee, and the membership of

our local business community.

There is no funding from any level of government.

It's just this great team of dedicated people doing this because they care about the Bundaberg business community.

So, what's happening in the next few months that business should be involved in?

This month we have the August Business breakfast, the theme of which is "Workplace Resilience, Leadership and Culture" and we have two of Bundaberg's foremost leaders in the field, Greg Goldsworthy and Tanya O'Shea.

Sponsored by Bundaberg Council, we will also have from the Councils Community Recovery Resilience Officer with plenty of information on developing resilience in our businesses.

We also have a very special end of month



event at an iconic Bundaberg location, which we will be announcing very soon.

We follow this with the September Breakfast, where Chamber is hosting the nbn Virtual Reality Roadshow, where members and guests will have early access to experience this technology first-hand and explore its practical applications for business.

Come and join local business leaders for a hands-on look at how Virtual Reality is being used by Australian businesses to improve workforce training, onboarding and customer service.

September's coffee catchup is with Brave Brothers, raising awareness during mental health month.

We then have the AGM breakfast, where we will see a new committee elected, including a new president.

Then the big one – the Business Excellence Awards on 7 November.

All the details are on the Chambers website at bundabergchamber.com.au and we are incredibly grateful for all our sponsors.

Get involved with your Chamber today and connect your business into Bundaberg's business network.

Bundaberg Tourism helps us become part of visitors' itinerary

By Angela Norval

When Cha Cha Chocolate owner, Melanice Jacobsen first opened Cha Cha Chocolate, she knew she wasn't just opening a chocolate shop, but creating an experience for both locals and visitors.

Signing up for business membership of Bundaberg Tourism, she continues to see how Bundaberg Tourism plays such an important role in showcasing everything the region has to offer, so becoming a member was a natural fit.

Melanice said it gives the Cha Cha Chocolate team the opportunity to connect with visitors who are looking for unique local experiences and helps put the business alongside other fantastic attractions that make Bundaberg worth exploring.

"Bundaberg Tourism provides exposure through their website, visitor information centre, social media and regional marketing campaigns," she said.

"Many travellers are looking for authentic local experiences before they even arrive, and being featured through Bundaberg Tourism helps us become part of their itinerary.

"We regularly have customers tell us they found us through tourism recommendations

from the local visitor centre and that's invaluable for a small independent business."

Cha Cha Chocolate continues to show how specialty businesses are often the places people remember most because they offer something they can't experience anywhere else.

"Great customer service is equally important.

"Every interaction leaves an impression, not just of your business but of Bundaberg as a whole.

"We always want visitors to leave feeling welcomed, valued and excited to tell others about their experience.

"If every local business provides that same level of service, it strengthens Bundaberg's reputation as a destination people genuinely want to return to."

Asked what it was valuable for businesses to be active members of Bundaberg Tourism, Melanice said no single business can market an entire region on its own, but together they can create a much stronger destination.

"The more visitors we attract to the region, the more everyone benefits—from accommodation providers and cafes to retailers, attractions and local producers.

"Working together helps showcase everything that makes Bundaberg unique and encourages

people to stay longer and spend more within our community.

"It's important for retailers to be showcased amongst attractions in this region especially in the CBD as we are the heartbeat of the main street.

"Seeing how far Cha Cha Chocolate has come from its original days to now is very rewarding and something I never take for granted.

"We started with a simple dream and a passion for creating a beautiful chocolate shop, and over the years we've grown into a destination that people actively seek out.

"One of the most special parts is seeing locals come back time and time again for their favourite treats or a special gift for someone.

"Then to have visitors from all over Australia—and even overseas—discover us while they're in Bundaberg and make Cha Cha Chocolate part of their holiday memories is really humbling.

"Knowing that people leave with not only great chocolate but also a positive experience of our business and our region makes all the hard work worthwhile.

"We're proud to be a small part of what makes Bundaberg such a great place to visit, and we hope every customer leaves with a reason to come back."



Cha Cha Chocolate owner Melanice Jacobsen continues to work to make visiting the store a wonderful experience for locals and visitors alike. (Elka Scherer: 516063)

Etex strengthening its Australian plasterboard operations

Etex, a global leader in lightweight construction solutions, is reinforcing its commitment to Australia through a strategic investment programme across its manufacturing network.

It totals AUD 44 million with targeted upgrades at its Siniat plasterboard production sites in Bundaberg, Altona in Victoria, Hazelmere in Western Australia and Matraville in New South Wales.

Etex is investing approximately \$8 million in its Bundaberg plasterboard operation and will create seven permanent, full-time production roles at the site.

The project will add warehouse capacity and upgrade logistics operations to support higher production volumes.

Australian contractors and suppliers will also be engaged to help deliver the works.

The Australian plasterboard market is projected to grow over 20 per cent in volume by 2032, driven by a housing shortage and non-residential demand.

These initiatives by Etex will expand plasterboard production capacity, support market growth across the country, and generate new employment opportunities with a total of 14 expected new roles across Bundaberg and Hazelmere.

Gavin Burton, Asia-Pacific regional head of Etex's Building Performance Division: "Our success in Australia has been built on strong local operations and trusted relationships

with customers.

"By continuing to invest in our operations, we are positioning Etex Australia for long-term growth while ensuring we can better meet our customers' evolving needs, and expand our presence across the region."

In Bundaberg, there will be additional warehousing and upgrades to logistics operations will support higher volumes.

Bundaberg is expected to be completed after the Matraville works and before the larger Altona project.

The Australian team currently expects the full program to be completed by mid-2028, subject to approvals and the delivery of specialised equipment.

Rob Verguizas, Country Manager Australia: "These investments reflect our commitment to strengthening our operations in Australia and supporting the growth of our customers in a dynamic market.

"By improving operational performance, we are preparing our network to better meet future demand across the country."

This investment builds on recent developments, including Etex's acquisition of Knauf's former plasterboard business in Australia (2021) and BGC's plasterboard and fibre cement businesses in Australia and New Zealand (2024), reinforcing the company's strategy to expand in high-potential regions beyond Europe.



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