

GRIFFITH BUSINESS CHAMBER INCORPORATED
71st Annual General Meeting Minutes
Thursday 31st October 2024 | 5.45pm | The GEM Hotel

Incorporation # Y1358815

MINUTES OF AGM

Meeting declared opened at 5.50pm

Attendance: Amanda Quarisa, John Nikolic, Darren DeBortoli, William Phillips, Thomas Ford, John Collins, Michael Rowley, Carmel LaRocca, Manjit Singh Lally, Danny Roller, John Wadsworth, Darryn Savage, Sophie Sun.

1: APOLOGIES

Sara Pixley, Marg Couch

2: PRESIDENT WELCOME & REPORT– John Nikolic

It's been another successful year for Chamber, with a number of wins in our key policy areas.

Chamber's 2024 policy priorities were addressing the worker and housing shortage, being the biggest constraint on our city's growth, and water advocacy – in particular opposing the Federal government's proposed water buy-backs.

DAMA

On 4 April 2024, after many years of lobbying by the Chamber, the Department of Home Affairs approved a variation to the Orana Designated Area Migration Agreement (**DAMA**) which will now include Griffith.

DAMAs assist with skilled migration in three main ways, by:

1. Providing for a bespoke skilled occupation list, which reflects the unique skills shortages being faced in a particular geographical area, such as Griffith;
2. Providing employers with a broader recruitment pool, by granting concessions in relation to age limits, English literacy tests and salary levels; and
3. Incentivising foreign workers to migrate, by providing a pathway to permanent residency.

To assist members in utilising the DAMA, the Chamber also hosted a seminar with Glen Cole from Australian Skilled Migration. Early anecdotal evidence is that at least some members have utilised the DAMA. It's only in place for 12 months – until 3 April 2025 – and has 1500 allocated positions. If employers want to access the DAMA, they must act now, which will also increase the likelihood of the DAMA being extended.

Housing and Worker Shortage Taskforce

In November 2023, the Griffith Business Chamber created the Griffith Worker and Housing Shortage Taskforce, in conjunction with Griffith City Council, with representative from the office of Helen Dalton MP, Member for the Seat of Murray, and the office of Sussan Ley MP, Federal Member for the Seat of Farrer.

Griffith's economic growth is currently constrained by a lack of available labour – our local economy is currently at or near full employment, with unemployment at 1.8 percent. But even if workers can be recruited, employers despair to find suitable accommodation.

The key recommendation is to increase the supply of medium density, affordable housing. 50 percent of households are single persons or couples, with the trend to those housing types increasing, yet only a very small proportion of new dwellings are medium-density. The report recommends that the supply of medium-density housing be increased through:

- a) partnerships with CHPs to deliver medium-density, affordable housing projects, similar to the Griffin Green Project;
- b) Amendments to planning controls to facilitate delivery by developers of medium-density, affordable housing projects; and
- c) Encouragement and incentivisation of individual land-owners to construct secondary-dwellings and tiny homes.

SRV

Another key piece of advocacy was in relation to the Council's Special Rate Variation, which was opposed by Chamber, which submitted that a single, significantly lower rate rise should be applied, coupled with alternative revenue raising measures. Following submissions by chamber, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal applied a lower rate raise than that sought by Council, being 7.5 per year for two years, rather than for three years.

The Chamber will continue to monitor the implementation of alternative revenue raising measures over the coming year.

Water buy-backs

The Chamber continues to oppose the federal government's proposed water buy-backs, which would have the effect of permanently removing water from productive use and diminishing economic activity. In 2024, the Chamber launched a campaign that 'without water, this business might not be here', by delivering posters to businesses to display in their shops – which were well received.

Business confidence

In the final quarter of 2024, the Chamber will be launching a 'Buy Local' campaign, to remind consumers of the benefits of supporting local businesses, which continue to do it tough in the face of high costs and subdued consumer spending.

Membership and member events

Throughout 2024, the chamber hosted a number of member events, usually on a monthly basis, by seeking guest speakers on a range of topics relevant to business, which provide an opportunity to network and learn.

Membership has been steady, but with some diversification in new members, who are welcomed to the Chamber.

It's been a pleasure to act as the President for the Griffith Business Chamber in 2024. We've much to be proud of and more is yet to come.

Many thanks to our outgoing general committee members, in particular Darryn Savage, who will be stepping down for 2025.

3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM MEETING – held on 30th October 2023

Moved: Darryn Savage

Seconded: Danny Roller

Motion carried

4: FINANCIAL REPORT

John Nikolic and Amanda Quarisa presented a summary of the Financial Report.

Moved: Michael Rowley

Seconded: Manjit Singh Lally

Motion carried

5. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Wadsworth was invited to be Returning Officer to declare all positions vacant.

Nominations for President:

Nominated: John Nikolic

Nominated by: Danny Roller

Seconded: Darryn Savage

Elected, congratulations!

Nominations for Vice-President:

Nominated: Danny Roller

Nominated by: John Nikolic

Seconded: Manjit Singh Lally

Elected, congratulations!

Nominations for Treasurer:

Nominated: Manjit Singh Lally

Nominated by: Darryn Savage

Seconded: John Nikolic

Elected, congratulations!

Nominations for Secretary:

Nominated: Amanda Quarisa

Nominated by: Darryn Savage

Seconded: Danny Roller

Elected, congratulations!

Public Officer: Remains unchanged. No vote required. Michael Rowley.

Nominations for Committee Members.

Nominated: Dean Owen

Nominated by: Self nominated

Seconded: Amanda Quarisa

No Vote required. Elected. Congratulations.

Nominated: William Phillips

Nominated by: Self nominated

Seconded: Amanda Quarisa

No Vote required. Elected. Congratulations.

Nominated: Thomas Ford
Nominated by: Self nominated
Seconded: Amanda Quarisa
No Vote required. Elected. Congratulations.

Called for nominations from the floor.

Nominated: Carmel La Rocca
Nominated by: Manjit Singh Lally
Seconded: Danny Roller
Accepted. Motion carried.

Nominated: Michael Rowley
Nominated by: Amanda Quarisa
Seconded: Darryn Savage
Accepted. Motion carried.

Nominated: Jason Dossetor
Nominated by: John Nikolic
Seconded: Carmel La Rocca
Accepted. Motion carried.

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

Manjit Singh Lally raised the concern about the announcement of the Riverina Field Days cancellation and how disappointing it was for Griffith to lose this event. Discussions were raised about other possible organisations that could take over the event including Griffith City Council.

Amanda Quarisa declared her interest in the discussion due to her conflict of contract work with the Coro Club who underwrite the Riverina Field Days.

Motion: For Griffith Business Chamber to write a letter to Griffith City Council to see there is interest in running the event.

Moved: Manjit Singh Lally
Seconded: Danny Roller
Motion Carried

7. CLOSE

There being no further business, meeting closed 6.15pm.

All are welcome to join us for networking drinks and nibbles.

Minute Secretary | Amanda Quarisa