

Boroondara Farmers' Market (BFM) Report to RCG Forum, Tuesday, 19/7/22

Thank you Richard,

This could be a real challenge; how to do justice to something as significant, long-established and complex as our BFM and do it successfully in three minutes. But here goes!

Tonight I'd like to leave you with one very important number, 95%. That's the percentage of this Club's total discretionary funds generated by the BFM. All the highly commendable programs which we've heard about tonight depend on this revenue. Since its inception, the BFM has raised an estimated \$1.7 million!

Having volunteered on numerous early shifts at the BFM, it wasn't until Wayne Worlidge and I succeeded Rob Winspear and Ian Salek as Co-Chairs at the end of last year, that I very quickly realised just how much work goes on behind the scenes to ensure a smoothly operating market 26 weeks of the year, come rain, hail or Covid. Somewhat akin to the proverbial iceberg. And a sincere 'thank you' to both Rob and Ian for the immense amount of effort they both put in, especially during the last two very challenging years, before handing the reins to Wayne and me.

For the benefit of our ever-growing number of newer members, the continuing strength, success and prosperity of our Club is underpinned by the significant revenue raised by the BFM on the first, third and, four times a year, the fifth Saturday.

We need to work closely with Boroondara City Council who manage the site, both Patterson Reserve and the adjoining carpark, vet new stallholder applications and all annual renewals. Wayne and I normally meet with the council representative, Nickie Wainwright, a few days prior to each Saturday market, but we also regularly update each other by email or phone.

In addition, the Co-Chairs meet monthly on the first Tuesday with our Club's BFM committee consisting of Carol Benson, Rob Winspear, Tim Gale, Caroline Larwood, Thelma Hutchison and Jo Bertoli. So thank you to all of our committee members for your continuing support and contribution to the successful management of our markets.

The financial management (eg invoicing, updating the spreadsheet of which stallholders will be attending future markets, which markets they've paid for, chasing delinquent stallholders) of the BFM has, for many years, been the responsibility of the market treasurer, John Suriano. John has invested countless hours working behind the scenes to ensure everything is in order. Having recently, very smoothly, handed over these essential and multiple responsibilities to Carol and Thelma, we can thank John and wish him immense enjoyment with all his new-found spare time!

Similarly, with the BFM rostering which has, for many years been the province of Robert and Miffy Hogan, ensuring that each market has a full complement of captain and three crew for both the first and second shifts. Essential work but now they've handed their roster 'bible' across to Wayne so he and I will, henceforth, assume this responsibility. So, many thanks Robert and Miffy, all your hard work has been greatly appreciated.

Over the last couple of years, despite the ravages of Covid, the attendant restrictions and its effects on stallholder numbers and, more recently, a particularly wet and cold winter, BFM has, according to the key metrics (i.e. numbers of stallholders and patrons and hence revenue) continued strongly. For example comparing 2-7/21 with 2-7/22, for the first Saturday of the calendar month, the average number of stallholders increased modestly from 27 to 30 while the average number of patrons fell

marginally from 610 to 602. It is worth noting that we only introduced the first Saturday market in February 2021.

And for our longest-running and therefore best attended market, on the third Saturday of the month, there has been a drop in the average number of stallholders from 64 to 52 accompanied by, somewhat paradoxically, a modest increase in patronage from 898 to 936. This not insignificant decline in average numbers of stallholders reflects one of our greatest current challenges; the ravages of the latest Omicron variants amongst small, largely family-owned and staffed growers.

Against this, however, a very positive indicator for the continuing success of the market is the steady stream of new stallholders and the level of enquiries and completed applications from others. All are given a three-market trial before, hopefully, becoming regulars. And with all new additions, we need to be cognisant of the potential effect on existing stallholders; there's always the tension between the competing goals of maximising the number and diversity of stalls and their products whilst trying to avoid antagonising our existing stallholders.

So, in conclusion, turning back to our Club, we need to encourage more members to add their names to the market roster on ClubRunner. Currently, we have the same members signing-up repeatedly for the first (0700-1000) or second (1000-1230) shift and burn-out is a constant danger. We need to 'spread the love' for this essential, highly rewarding and enjoyable activity. 'Working', I use the term advisedly, at the BFM doesn't just help to ensure the continuing revenue stream to our Club, but it also affords a marvellous opportunity for fellowship with other Club members and, of course, the patrons and stallholders. You'll walk away from your shift with a sense of having achieved something truly worthwhile, for the community, for our Club and yourself!

Thank you for your time.