



Melbourne Business Awards Chairperson Report 26 November 2020

I am pleased to present the 2020 Annual Report of Melbourne Business Awards. The report details the limited activities and accomplishments over the past 12 months, and details some of the challenges for the future.

Building on the achievements of the last 28 years, the MBA continued to strive to promote manufacturing and industry in Melbourne's South East in the first half of the financial year, however, the organisation went in to recess for 2020. More details about this recess is provided later in this report.

The 2019/20 financial year was certainly "unprecedented" in the history of the MBA and yet there is a strange tie back to when the MBA was first established in the last recession of 1992. It remains to be seen whether current economic conditions will see a refocusing on manufacturing and what the MBA stands for.

I would like to thank each member of the committee for their selfless contribution to the organisation and to the business community of south east Melbourne over a very long time.

I would also like to thank Kim and Gail Mastrowicz from the Main Event for the totally professional way that each event was run and our fantastic MC Kamahl Barhoush who was again superb and totally engaging. The feedback from attendees was always so positive.

As always the MBA was well served by its sponsors in 2019. Thanks go to the City of Kingston; Bendigo Bank Dingley Village Community Branch; the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR); Holmesglen TAFE; DFK Nugents; M&K Lawyers; Nichols Crowder; Streamscape; MAV Audio Visual; Complete Colour; and EWI Photography and Video.

I would like to express our shock and sadness at the untimely passing of our longtime in-kind supporter Ron Stark from Streamscape who provided the MBA website. Thank you Ron for your valued contribution over many years.

Nominees

The quality of the Business of the Year nominations in 2019 was first rate with every company demonstrating such innovation in products, services and business models. The quality of the nominations was helped by the partnership developed with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) whereby they were able to introduce the MBA to truly excellent manufacturing companies in the broader south east region. It was hoped that this partnership would lead to an expansive regional

approach to the recognition of manufacturing. This will be discussed later in my report.

The Awards

As always the final Gala Breakfast is the highlight of the year and 2019 was no exception. Prior to the announcement of the Award winners, we were privileged to hear from a fantastic guest speaker in JB Hifi CEO, Richard Murray who provided amazing insights into the running of this highly successful company. Sincere thanks to Ray de Jersey for inviting Richard to speak.

Congratulations to all nominated companies: Local Shed Solutions; PMG Engineering; Boat Rocker Brewing Company; Prana Chai; Mattress Builders; Footwork Podiatric Laboratory and Icon Creations.

A special congratulations to the main award winners:
“Business of the Year” – Footwork Podiatric Laboratory
“Innovation Award” – Prana Chai
“Service Business Excellence Award” – Chatfield OzCool

Sadly 2019 saw the passing of one of the MBA’s strongest supporters, past chair and MBA “Business Legend” Bob Gawne. The Young Achievers Award was renamed in his honour with the inaugural “Bob Gawne Young Achiever’s Award” being presented to Marian O’Leary from Rollspack.

Other Activities

As outlined in last year’s report, the MBA secured funding from Bentleigh-Moorabbin Central Rotary Club to support the roll out in 2020 of a pilot program for the “Business Voice in Schools Project”, an initiative by Tim Curtis from South Oakleigh College. Avril Regan was appointed to co-ordinate the project on behalf of the MBA. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the implementation of this project Denise Langford has continued to communicate with the project partners and it is hoped that the project will commence again in 2021.

Structure

2019/20 Committee

Acting Chair – Suzanne Ferguson (Economic Edge)

Treasurer - Gary Nugent (DFK Nugents Accountants)

Committee - Paul Kirton (M & K Lawyers)

Committee - Nabil Salameh (Quantum Business Advisors)

The Committee was supported by Executive Officer Rod Shell and Event Manager Kim Mastrowicz.

The Future

The Committee recognised that the heartland of manufacturing in south east Melbourne has been shifting for a number of years and that the future of the MBA depended on engaging with a broader audience across the region.

While the financial viability of the organisation is heavily dependent on the cash contribution of sponsors, their active on-going participation relies on the MBA demonstrating that it is relevant and meeting the needs of sponsors' and their clients.

In 2019 our Annual Supporter base was significantly reduced (companies and individuals who sign up to attend each breakfast). This continued the slide in attendance at the breakfasts that has been an issue for the past few years.

There was clearly a need to understand how best to promote the importance of local manufacturing to our region. As such, the Committee resolved to put the MBA into recess for 2020 to allow time to undertake a strategic review and to engage with potential partners within the region such as DJPR, local councils and other interested parties to develop a model and a forum that truly showcased the enormous contribution that advanced manufacturing makes to the economic and community well-being of south east Melbourne.

Unfortunately businesses and the community were turned on their heads in early 2020 with the Covid-19 pandemic. It was impossible for any organisation to plan for the future with such uncertainties. As such, the MBA is still in recess. However, it is ironic that the pandemic highlighted why local manufacturing is so vital. Such an enormous shock exposes vulnerabilities and frailties in supply chains that can have enormous repercussions for an entire country.

There is probably no more important time to support our manufacturing sector. However, at this stage there currently is no clear pathway for how the MBA may play a part in this. Discussions with DJPR and the other local councils in south east Melbourne in December 2019 did not generate sufficient support for a regional forum to showcase manufacturing.