



Managers' Report

1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020

When I was asked after last year's AGM how I thought the following financial year would be, I had no hesitation saying that from a One Warkworth perspective it was going to be huge!

Well it has been a different year - especially the last six months - one that none of us saw coming and very few if any, knew how to deal with.

The financial year started well with the first big challenge being to work through the Business Improvement District establishment process. This involved engaging extensively with local businesses and landlords to ensure they understood what it was all about and collecting contact details so they could vote. We reached 300+ stakeholders during this time and of the many businesses that I visited, all except two indicated they wanted to be involved in a BID.

The BID vote itself was a success with over 40 percent of eligible businesses voting and 88 percent voting in favour of establishing a Warkworth BID. This result was testament to the hard work done by the committee and the management team over the previous three and a half years, as well as the work of previous committees.

In the first six months of the financial year we were also busy hosting the Mayoral and Local Board debates for the Auckland Council elections. Both events were well attended giving locals the opportunity to question the brave souls wanting to stand for public office.

We facilitated the Transport Forum, which meets two-monthly bringing community groups and officials together to advance infrastructure issues like Matakana Link Road, Hill Street, Puhoi to Warkworth motorway interchanges, tolling and the western collector route.

With the help of our local MPs and Auckland Council representatives, we also met directly with government ministers to discuss roading and infrastructure to ensure the needs of our area were on the agenda and not forgotten.

We held social media workshops, networking events including our very popular women's events, and our inaugural Men's Health workshop, which was very well attended.

We supported the Mahurangi Winter Festival of Lights, which lit up Warkworth and had over 6,000 people enjoying a spectacular laser light show in Baxter Street. This event attracted a large number of non-residents / visitors who made good use of local accommodation and hospitality businesses.

We have been involved with the Mahurangi River Restoration Trust and were delighted with the decision by the government to grant the Trust just over \$4million to help get the river cleaned up. Phase one should be completed in sixteen months and will give local businesses the opportunity to capitalise on the tourism opportunities this will bring.

We once again organised the Warkworth Santa Parade and were very fortunate to have Jennian Homes on board as our main sponsor. This enabled us to replace the old Christmas street flags with a large number of new ones bringing colour and festivity to our town. We had a good number of floats and with the sun shining had around 4k – 5k mums, dads and children having a great day seeing Santa and spending time in town.

At the beginning of March, we were an integral part of the organising group for the Australian Bushfire Aid appeal that helped raise over \$25,000 for the victims of the fires. Then Covid-19 hit New Zealand and it would be fair to say our world changed dramatically as we went into lockdown and businesses struggled to make sense of things.

One Warkworth fielded many calls around wage subsidies and HR issues during this time, and doing as much as we could remotely, worked closely with local experts to help our local businesses through.

We also worked extremely hard to access and filter the plethora of information coming from Auckland Council, various agencies and the government to support businesses. The volume of information being pushed out could easily have been overwhelming, so we made good use of our digital platforms to keep in touch with local business-people and provide what was relevant.

During lockdown we were also part of the group called Mahurangi Caremongers, which assisted the elderly and those in need with shopping and community contact. While arguably not a key role of a business association, in my view our involvement was absolutely imperative, and as a responsible member of the wider community our organisation will continue to support these initiatives as required.

Throughout the year, we have continued to provide essential services and advice to visitors and locals alike via the One Warkworth Information Centre and the work of our centre manager, Alison and her wonderful volunteers. We look forward to growing these services over the next year.

As always, we have continued to engage with our business community through our regular newsletters, which continue to achieve above-average readership and our Facebook page, which has over 1300 followers and growing daily. Our website is actively maintained, and we constantly helped businesses update their directory listings to help increase their visibility.

I want to thank the One Warkworth Committee for their continued support and to my team: Rachel, Melanie, Alison and Claire (who left us early in the year) for their amazing work - I couldn't do it without them.

I also want to make a special mention our sponsors who since One Warkworth started have been the foundation on which we have grown from. These are companies who have the community at heart and contribute well beyond what could be expected from a business perspective, and we appreciate immensely their continued support.

What will the next year bring for us? I hope a much more settled year, but I am not sure I want to put any money on it!