



ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018



President's report

Communities and our food systems are one of the most important ways we can lead a connected life: uniting people to the land, to each other and to their own cultural heritage and traditions.

Promoting food systems that are local, secure, sustainable and socially inclusive help to preserve natural resources, strengthen communities and improve our physical and mental wellbeing. In the process, friendships are made, networks are formed and delicious things are shared.

The Beechworth Food Co-op was founded with a whole system focus and understanding that no single initiative would provide the solution for building rural resilience, so our ambitions have always been broad. With nearly four years of operation behind us, we've had a year that was not entirely unexpected but at times difficult to navigate. We have continued to be an associated body who operates a weekly food store (17 hours per week), delivers a range of educational events (18 per year) and works tirelessly to advocate for the merits of a robust, resilient, local food system. However, our location, our energy and our business cycle all lead to it being a slower period than we have seen in the past three years with growth slowing right down on all fronts, particularly in the second half of this financial year.

No longer are we a "new" enterprise with exuberant energy and no systems. In fact, we are the opposite, we have wonderful systems in place, but our processes may have become onerous to the detriment of our agility and interest to our membership base.

For the first half of the year, we had a stable shop manager which allowed the Board to transition away from being operational and towards a more strategic focus. However, we over-reached with our commitment to this paid role and extended beyond our limitations which had dire impact on our cash-flow.

The Board sought external directional guidance via the Farming Together industry support program which resulted in the decision to implement a change to the number of paid hours and therefore the position description of the Store Manager. This resulted in the resignation of the incumbent store manager, unfortunately coinciding with a shortfall of volunteers. This was a difficult period, in terms of pressure on the Board's capacity to maintain the shop offering. Fortunately, by March, a new store operations manager had been appointed and new volunteers had been trained so our sense of stability resumed and we focused on consolidating new initiatives such as the "50 product guarantee", "self-serve shop front" and enhanced effort towards moving to the railway station.

- Jade Miles, President



2017/18 Successes:

- We were successful in receiving a **\$10,000 grant from the Border Trust's "Into Our Hands"** fund which was crucial for the purchase of another fridge and fit-out of the new building including more storage bins. This is not yet acquitted but we anticipate that the final purchase of an inbuilt refrigerated room will be complete by end of December in the new venue.
- Support was sought and delivered by **"Farming Together"** who provided independent assessment and strategic feedback to allow for 'next steps' planning.
- Securing a \$3,000 grant from Bendigo Bank for use on a new sales system (to be installed into the new venue) and display bins.
- Advocacy and subsequent driver for the development of a **Local Food Action Plan** which includes a wide range of regional agencies and is a cross sector strategy now ready for funding application.
- Participation in **2 x Regional Assemblies** representing Local Food Advocacy
- Continued invitations to speak at numerous regional, State and Interstate conferences about our model, our challenges and the longer term opportunities.
- We **continued employment** of a paid staff member - Amber Croft - who is paid for 10 hours each week providing consistent, support for our team of volunteers and our shoppers.
- We assisted with the development of and then participated in the **Greener Grass schools program** with 12 separate excursion groups to the food co op
- Delivered **12 events/workshops** which included over 400 participants (and many more if the pick your own events are included)
- We signed a contract allowing us to move into a **new venue** with better street presence, capacity to host our events and engage more broadly with community, space for a community garden, opportunity to work with MAP (Montessori adolescent program) and the youth group, better storage and space to launch our fortnightly eater/grower meet.

2017/18 Challenges:

- Over-reaching our weekly financial commitment to a paid role which undermined our volunteers' contribution and compromised our cash flow
- Losing our first paid staff member with no notice
- Reduction in volunteer involvement
- Reduction in weekly purchases
- Loss of consistently available range of stock
- Ongoing IT difficulties



To measure success we have realised that our goals are about leaving a long-term legacy. We are not measuring only by numbers but by our ability to impact habits, connection, and engagement. Our terms of success are somewhat intangible but equally powerful when looked at through the lens of community resilience

Beechworth Food Co-op Strategic Goals

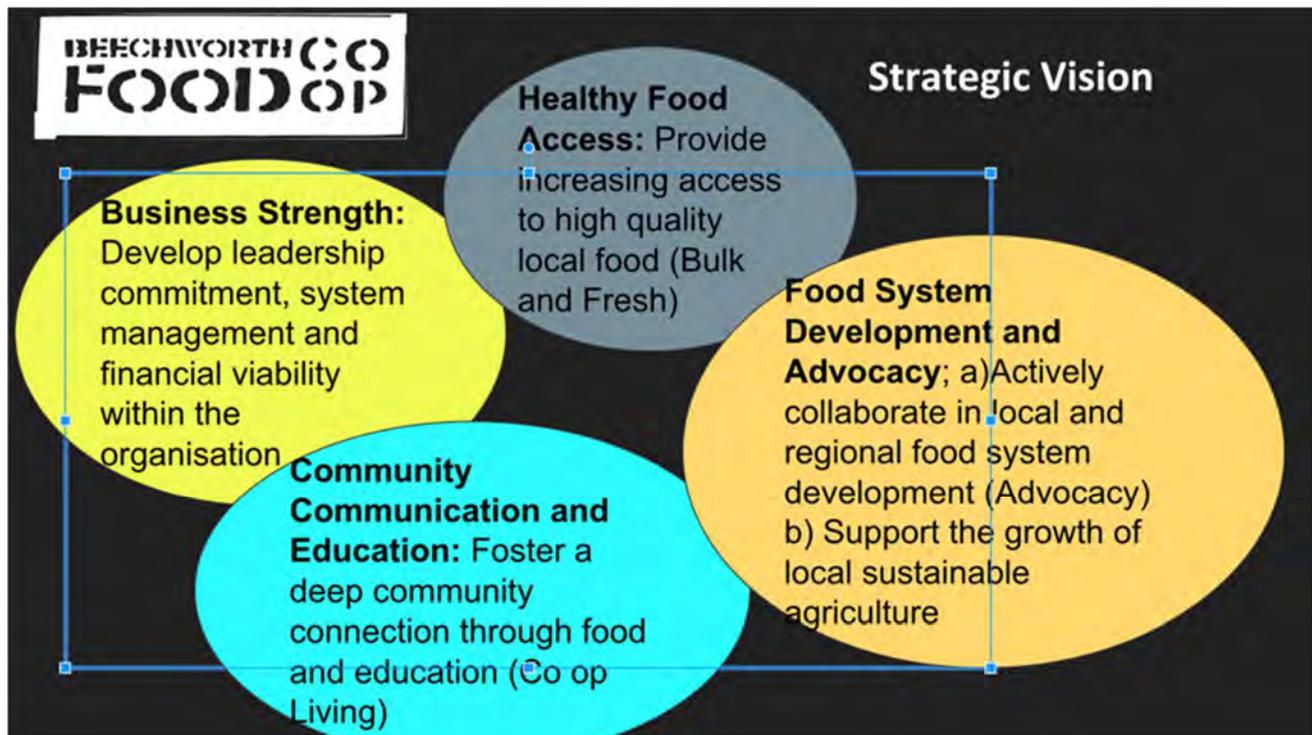
We, the Beechworth food Co-op, are part of an international slow/fair/local/ethical food movement that is working hard to put celebration and honour back into the food that we eat and by doing so, reconnecting us to our food and the people who grow it which in turn supports the vigour and health of our rural communities. While we are still small our vision is big, strong and clear as defined in the strategic plan. We have four broad pillars to our strategic plan:

Business Strength - Recognised as the most necessary if we were going to be successful in delivering on our other three goals. Our terms of success are more about people, connection and engagement than economic-centric KPIs.

Healthy Food Access - Ensuring that high quality, provenance identified wholefoods and locally grown fresh foods could be readily available - filling the gap left by the supermarkets.

Communication and education - The goal which takes the most work - We have an events program we deliver a regular newsletter and an in-store education approach which assists with this but is an ever evolving monitoring of the tone we take, the language we use, and the mediums we utilise.

Food System development and advocacy This takes two avenues. One is more about whole system thinking which is being done by the likes of Sustain, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, Open Food Network and the other is the on the ground work with local growers.





Advocacy and Education by Beechworth Food Co Op 2017/2018

In order to make headway against the area of our strategy “Community Communication and Education” we undertook the following in the 2017-18 year:

Events delivered:

- Greener Grass Workshop Day September - 14 Attended
- Grow the Growers Workshop September -13 Attended
- Grafting Workshop, September -23 Attended
- Patch to Patch, November - 90 Attended
- Seed Saving and Farm Tour - February - 98 Attended
- Fair Food Farmers and Followers Gathering - Feb, - 74 attended
- Volunteers Morning Tea - March, - 33 attended
- Pick your Own apples at Europa Gully Orchards x 8 weekends in March, April and May. < 1000 attended
- Wicking Bed Workshop April - 36 Attended
- Abundance Swap – May - 30 attended
- Pick Your Own Oranges in Taminick June
- That Sugar Film movie Night, July - 70 attended
- Fermentation Workshop - August 4th - 15 Attended
- AGM, August - 15 attended

School Excursions - 1 hour session covering food provenance, waste minimisation, the value of a local food system, what is ‘organic’, taste testing Q and A and hands on trail-mix making

- Galen Year Nine - 70 attended
- Carey Grammar Year 8 - 78 Attended
- Montessori Cycle Three - 26 attended

*” If you want to build a ship, don’t
drum up people together to collect wood
and don’t assign them tasks and work, but
rather teach them to long for the sea”*

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

“We are more than just white buckets”

There is no 20-second elevator speech which can explain why any food co-op exists. To an outsider it appears to be a somewhat higgledy-piggledy food store with erratic fresh food offerings grown by locals and dry goods in unsexy white buckets.

In truth the principals which sit behind the business and the greater holistic reason for being are complex, confronting, and fundamentally different to the paradigm that the vast majority of Australians are more comfortable with.

The process of educating the broader community about such things as food sovereignty, food miles, community resilience, provenance, waste reduction, seasonality, seed biodiversity and soil health is the greatest challenge faced in running a food co-op...especially when they can go to the supermarket and buy what they want, when they want it, from someone who doesn't know their names without posters on the wall that challenge their thinking about the food decisions they have made.

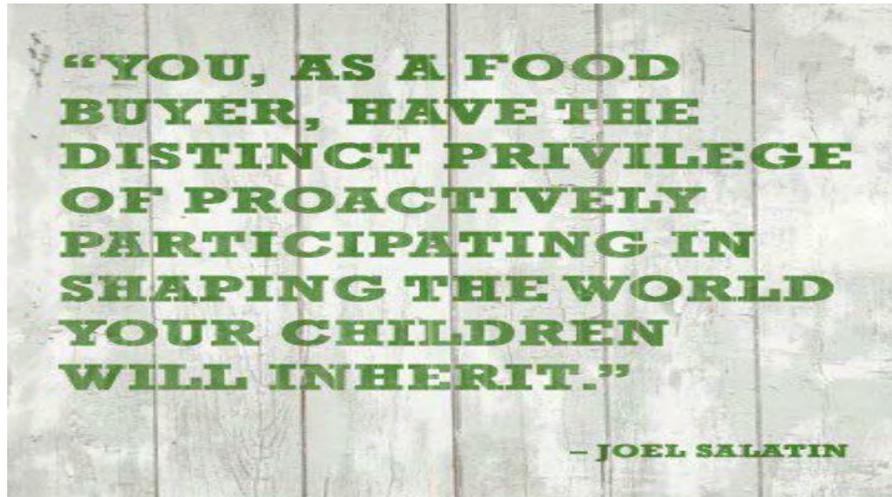
Making a commitment to stocking a “fair food” pantry is bloody massive and quite honestly while the industrial system is as unchallenged, price appealing and convenient as it is, the uphill battle to be heard as a voice that offers a broader understanding of the greater impacts that a fair food system can offer, is a very steep climb. That's the greatest challenge of opening a food co-op. because while you are considering all of this, your audience is still looking at the unsexy buckets and asking why you don't have bananas in stock.

The week in week out push is indeed relentless but with it comes the chance to make a deeper connection with volunteers from your community who you've never crossed paths with, to visit farms run by three generations, to taste fresh food picked from the tree, to share the donated abundance box offerings and to swap recipes with women from other parts of the world. Being part of a food co-op gives you a ticket to experience an intimacy of shared journeys with people you would otherwise just side step in the street.

The Playing field for Co-Ops in Australia is not a sprawling one but rather a tight, closely guarded, grass roots movement of passionates who are committed to their ethical principles. While this comment may be rebuked by some, it takes only a brief comparison with the USA Co-op sector to realise that Australia's offering is still being delivered by the deeply committed minority and is yet to leap into the USA paradigm of being not only supported by but led by Corporations and Government who have recognised the potential of a rapidly emerging market. They have recognised not only the economic return but the environmental and community rewards that are reaped when a local, connected, transparent approach to agricultural enterprise and food distribution is taken.

As the name suggests, this approach to doing business requires some serious ability to work cooperatively with a broad range of people, stakeholders' opinions, challenges, needs and long term desires but ultimately if the expectations for what success looks like are set early on and adopted by all the ball just keeps on rolling changing its pace as the community pushes or pulls.

While every co-op will be (and has to be) different, there is one rule which will always ring true: Your local food co-op will only be as strong, vibrant and innovative as the community which adopts it. It will move no faster or slower than the mass of your membership – an individual or group may push harder and faster from time to time but inevitably the pace will be set by the group and this is okay. In fact, it's more than okay, it is the raw reality and should be embraced, for the sustainable success of your local food, short supply chain, community connecting vision depends on it.



Volunteers - Our Life Blood

As a Co-operative, it means we are equally owned by every single member for the benefit of the broader community and not for the benefit of any one person more than another. In order to get to where we are today we have relied solely on volunteer hours of many and on the unrelenting commitment of a few who have been willing to take leadership roles. No one of these has been more important than any other and without any one of them we would not be where we are today.

***Thank you to every single volunteer who has contributed their time. You are committed, hardworking, and endlessly giving.
Thank you!***

The Beechworth Food Co-op Board

As we move into our fourth year as an associated board and our fifth as an organised committee, it is with delight that we can report a strong line up of continuous members and three complimentary new members for the 2018/2019 board.

Returning Board members

The depth of understanding that comes from repeated years of service cannot be underestimated and with this knowledge it is wonderful to be able to acknowledge and thank the continuing board members:

Jade Miles -
President



Jade will continue as President and in this role will endeavour to advocate publicly, educate where possible and connect with others also in the fair food sphere to ensure we have a strong understanding of the broader movement and where the Beechworth Food Co-op sits within this rapidly evolving industry. Jade's other priority and focus will be to launch the regular mid-week eater/grower meet.

Narelle Edwards -
Vice President



Eternally reliable, Narelle has proven herself invaluable as someone who is willing to be nimble and committed, moving her efforts as a board member to wherever they are needed most to keep the show-on-the road. She is driving a small working group to create whole system 'IT solutions' in the coming 12 months to minimise volunteer input and improve customer service.

Karen Nankervis -
Treasurer



With two years as treasurer and three as our book-keeper, Karen has a deep understanding of our financial strengths and weaknesses. In the coming 12 months the role will drive clarity of direction through the financial modelling that will inform how we scale up to service our members better. A jack of many trades, Karen is solutions oriented, happy to roll her sleeves up to get the job done and always positive in her approach to all things co-op

Carlene Lamanna -
Grants



Carlene continues her role as grant-guru, always on the look-out for funding opportunities, pulling together the applications, and managing delivery and acquittal of the grants.

New Board Members:

**Cecile Legrand -
Events**



Cecile works in the Food and environment sector, and is involved with several community groups in Yackandandah and Beechworth.

Cecile will be bringing her enthusiasm and experience to lead the events program for 2018/19.

**Lyndee Owen –
Facility management**



Lyndee is leading a new phase for the Co-op – being a lead tenant in a larger venue. The community meeting room at the railway station provides additional opportunities for community connection, co-op exposure and revenue resilience.

**Jill Croome –
Secretary**



Jill will be attempting to fill the big shoes of Chelsea Cherry by taking over the Secretary role for 2018/19.

Outgoing Board members:



Matt Woodburn
Sincere thanks to Matt for his calm management of Food Co-op volunteers, and assistance with marketing



Felicity Kennedy
Sincere thanks to Felicity for her efforts in marketing and events.

Chelsea Cherry



An absolute backbone of the Board since its inception, Chelsea has been our relentless Secretary, ensuring our systems were robust and our vision was clear. Her four years of commitment has been unwavering, thorough, professional and deeply empathetic during the history of the co-op.

Beechworth Food Co-op Board priorities for 2017/18 were:



What Next

1. To establish a path for board to become strategic not operational
2. To develop Financial viability model to allow for capacity building
3. To settle into the new venue and leverage from the improved location
4. To launch the fortnightly eater/grower meet to ensure grower support
5. To increase the % of products which are grown locally
6. To continue to deliver 12 skills building workshops in conjunction with other community groups
7. To continue to participate in the broader food movement
8. To collaborate with others to enhance education and opportunities

Treasurer's Report

Members of the Board and members of the Co-op, I present the Treasurer's report for the year ended 30th June 2018 and the financial statements for that year.

This year has seen long delays with the move to new premises, bringing uncertainty for members. Many were waiting for the move to shop regularly and our decrease in takings and membership reflects this. There is a lot of excitement about the move and we expect to see increases in all areas in the next financial year. We were fortunate to receive funding from 'Into Our Hands' and the Bendigo Bank allowing us to purchase fittings for the new shop.

Two new accounts were added, one for employment to ensure money is set aside for future payments, and one as a business account for grants and fundraising. This leaves the original account for the running of the shop.

In December, our shop manager, Shirley Douglas, moved from contractor to employee, and our expenses reflects the additional requirements. Amber Croft is now Shop Manager and doing an excellent job, particularly in managing the Vend system.

Big thankyou to Ange Davidson and Dirk deZwart, for all their work scheduling and paying the bills.

**Beechworth Food Co-op
Balance Sheet to 30th June 2018**

	30/6/17	30/6/18
<u>Assets</u>		
Current Assets		
Cash on Hand		
Cheque Account (2018 Shop Acc) [#]	\$ 2,001.90	\$ 664.93
Business Account		6344.61
Employment Account		586.27
Cash Drawer	-384.91	-2,788.85
Paypal Account	289.68	59.68
Shop Credits	-303.24	-1,347.42
Total Cash on Hand	\$ 1,603.43	\$ 3,519.22
Trade Debtors	90.00	180.00
Deposits Paid	0.00	0.00
Total Current Assets	\$ 1,693.43	3,699.22
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 1,693.43	\$3,699.22
 <u>Liabilities</u>		
Current Liabilities		
Loan – J&C Showers	0.00	\$ 116.65
GST Liabilities		
GST Collected	\$ 3,399.48	\$ 5,126.54
GST Paid	- 5,681.79	-\$ 8,198.92
Total GST Liabilities	- \$ 2,282.31	-\$3,072.38
Payroll Liabilities		
PAYG Withholding Payable		\$ 32.00
Total Payroll Liabilities		\$ 32.00
Total Current Liabilities	- \$ 2,282.31	-\$ 2,923.73
TOTAL LIABILITIES	- \$ 2,282.31	-\$ 2,923.73
 Net Assets	 \$ 3,332.17	 \$ 6,622.95
 <u>Equity</u>		
Retained Earnings	\$ 1,714.41	\$ 4,360.65
Current Year Earnings	\$ 2,261.33	\$ 2,262.30
TOTAL EQUITY	\$ 3,975.74	\$ 6,622.95

Karen Nankervis, Treasurer

The largest of thankyou's though goes to all Beechworth Food Co-op members, for it is you that makes this Co-op viable through your membership fee contribution, your volunteer hours, your commitment to sourcing your sustenance from ethical and local producers and your engagement, no matter how small or big, in a community run social enterprise that seeks to improve the viability of our local food system.