



12 August 2021

Dear co-op members,

Re: Notice of Annual General Meeting - Thursday 23 September 2021 6pm.

We hope you are staying warm and well over winter. The gymnastics required to navigate successive lockdowns is certainly keeping us agile, but at least we are free and able to see each other in our community again.

At our recent Special Meeting in June, the food co-op board outlined the challenges facing our organisation, including declining revenue, high fixed expenses and our reliance on a dwindling number of volunteers. These challenges have been building for some time, but are exacerbated by COVID lockdowns. The members at that meeting agreed on a way forward to a more sustainable operating model which includes online sales of bulk and fresh food, and a partnership with Quercus to provide community events and learning involving local food systems. A small number of members volunteered for working groups, for which all members are grateful. Currently, however, we have neither sufficient sales nor sufficient volunteers to power the transition to this new model. Without further commitment from members, the food co-op will have to close.

With this context, it's time for our Annual General Meeting and Board elections. We will be conducting both on **Thursday 23 September at 6pm in the Quercus Hall.**

At the 2020 AGM, four new Board members were elected to sit with the remaining three members. Sadly, last summer, parents of two board members (Michelle Ellis and Jenny Mackenzie) passed away; after taking leave from the Board both members felt they had to step down to focus on their families. Long serving member Penelope McGufficke resigned in late February to focus on moving house, work and family. All members left with our thanks and best wishes. Since that time, the board has approached several members to consider Board positions, but we have been unable to secure commitments. As a result, the current Board has been operating with only four members for several months, during a period of significant change. This situation cannot continue as constitutionally we require a minimum of five board members.

At our upcoming AGM three of the remaining four Board members will be stepping down. Dean Cleave-Smith has served as Treasurer for 3 years now, and advised 9 months ago that he would be resigning at this AGM. Having completed a year's term, Alison Lloyd and Elsa Gladigau are also stepping down, leaving Fiona Wigg as the only board member nominating for another term.

The food co-op needs to fill a minimum of four board positions at the AGM in order to continue operating. Failure to do this will trigger a winding-up of the organisation. If we want the food co-op to continue, we need members to make a commitment with their time and energy. All paid-up members of the co-op are able to nominate and vote in Board elections. We have extended current memberships until the AGM, so that anyone who was a member in 2020-21 will be able to participate in this process.

[Click here to download the board nomination form.](#) If you are interested in joining the Board please let us know via email info@beechworthfoodcoop.org.au - we can happily assist with finding members to co-sign your nomination, if you need.

One chapter of the co-op ends, with the closure of the railway station hub in September, and another begins. The outgoing board has great hopes for the future model that has been developed if we can jointly invest in that future as committed members. We hope you'll join us.

Warm wishes,

The Beechworth Food Co-op Board.