



CEO REPORT – AGM 2015

Good evening and welcome again to our annual AGM and thanks this year to Craig, Tania and the team at Crowe Horwath for hosting us for the first time, in their role as keystone sponsor.

This year with the Chamber has been another busy one for me, with a number of new programmes, the change in sponsorships, and move to new offices, bringing Toni into the team to manage the office (and me!), and starting to prepare for the inevitable challenges that may come with the impending financial downturns in our community. The membership mix has remained steady, and we have had a number of new businesses joining the Chamber, including a cluster of other for-purpose organisations based in Te Awamutu.

The Nexus youth programme, funded by Ministry of Youth Development, which will see 30 young people in our district undertake training and mentoring as they embark on self-employment, is going extremely well, with 13 participants already in the programme. Totally Te Awamutu has continued to grow, and 90% of our retailer and CBD businesses have been visited by either myself or Toni in the past few months – this group is now engaged through Facebook, a regular email from us, and of course the Chamber LINK magazine.

The monthly LINK lunch, held at Fahrenheit and sponsored by de Lautours.co is getting record attendance and this has become our key event for education and information. BA5's are booked through to the end of the year, and as always provide a great opportunity for informal networking – and as a showcase for a local business.

The 2015 Business Awards were our biggest and best yet, with just under 400 guests at the awards night, participation from more than 100 businesses, and of course, the inclusion of Raglan in the mix as well.

Our sponsor line-up will remain for this year, with Waikato Regional Council continuing to support the Sustainability Champions programme, the Waikato Management School maintaining their commitment through access to education for our members, and our McDonalds sponsored, soon to be launched 'OptiMUM' event – which will be especially for sole trader and home based business owners.

Alexandra Images will be part of this line up as our design partner, and People 4 Success are committed to another year of support through capability building workshops, and the Employee and People Manager of the Month awards.

We've had more press coverage than ever, thanks to support from the Te Awamutu Courier, and I have even made it onto TV, being interviewed about the impact of the impending Waikeria closures. Chamber has also been very proactive in the advocacy arena as we have entered into

robust and fruitful discussions with Waipa District Council through the 10 year plan. This has resulted in further discussion about projects we can contribute to over the coming months – in particular the Ultrafast broadband rollout, the library developments, and other sustainability initiatives for business.

We had a second visit from the Prime Minister, have hosted other Cabinet Ministers and MP's and have a number of other keynote speakers and presenters booked for the coming months.

The Te Awamutu Chamber continues to contribute to both the Northern Hub, consisting of all the Chambers between Northland and Taupo, and also the Regional Development Hub group, both of which offer me a chance to contribute to the overarching goal of business growth and success in our district. I have recently finished my study with Te Wananga Ao Aotearoa, and am now embarking on a yearlong Post Graduate Certificate in Community Leadership through the Waikato Management School, and look forward to these experiences and learnings being of benefit to my work within Chamber.

We have engaged the services of an MBA student to undertake a research project. Damian is looking at Te Awamutu the brand, and investigating what opportunities there are here to create or recreate ourselves as a great place not only to work live, learn and play, but also as a real and viable destination for business investment.

As always, we are challenged by the financial constraints of being heavily reliant on membership fees and sponsorship for our operating costs. The Nexus programme has injected a reasonable amount of funds into the Chamber although most of this funding will be used up in running the programme. I continue to look for more of these kinds of opportunities, where we can leverage the skills and expertise within the membership, and our ability to advocate on behalf of our members, whilst increasing the capability of business owners and operators in our community.

As I walk through the CBD, or visit a business in our industrial areas, when I drop in on one of our member businesses that are "out of sight", or when I go to meet with a new business in town, I am reminded of the importance of networking and connection for our businesses. Chamber is here to create connections, strengthen ties and to act for you in the role of advocacy to local and central government. My role is to ensure that we create THE best business environment that we can have, for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your support of the Chamber of Commerce Te Awamutu. I look forward to another year of business vitality.