



stanthorpe & granite belt chamber of commerce

23 January 2025

President's Message

Hello everyone and Happy New Year!!

There has been lots to celebrate since the Committee was elected in early September 2024. Key highlights include:

- **Business Knowledge Program – 4 training workshops ...**
- **Networking events held in September, October and December**
- **Business Excellence Awards for 2024 held on November 23**
- **Granite Belt Bush Christmas Event held on 19 December**

The Chamber has also been busy with a number of matters requiring some advocacy including:

- **Cleaning up misleading signage around the region**
- **Solutions for wine producers needing to recruit casual pickers now that the Best Employment is no longer funded under the Harvest Trail program**
- **Securing a future for the Queensland College of Wine Tourism (QCWT) now that University of Southern Queensland are withdrawing their involvement.**

See details on these matters outlined below plus several other updates!!!

Michelle Feenan
President

Future directions for QCWT

In early December quick action by the Chamber's President and local member James Lister advocating to the Premier and Minister, led to QCWT's staff retaining their jobs when it looking like the College was heading for a shutdown. The College is a centrepiece for this region and losing it would have been a disaster for the wine, hospitality and tourism industries locally. Since then, the Chamber has coordinated a cross-industry and community group, referred to as The Collective to explore next steps for the College. It involves the Granite Belt Wine & Tourism (GBWT, Grante Belt Growers Association (GBGA), Queensland Wine Industry Association (QWIA), The Southern Downs Regional Council (SDRC), the Stanthorpe State High School (SSHS), Queensland Country Tourism (QCT) and the Office of the Member for Southern Downs, James Lister.

The Collective are pushing to have an industry led entity to make a bid in the state government's EOI process commencing late January and so planning for what could be the future directions of the facility are currently underway.

A comprehensive community engagement process is being undertaken so that the whole of the region can have their say on the future of the wine college.



Networking events

The Chamber is continuing the program of networking events for 2025. A number of events have been scheduled from February to November, with them falling on the 4th Tuesday of each month. These events are a great way to connect up with fellow business owners, hear about industry developments in the region and meet new business owners. Our first one is scheduled for Tuesday 25th February at Kent's Saddlery a family business committed to supplying quality goods and saddlery services. Lyle Kent will tell the story of his family business and show us where and how the huge range of goods are made. We will also have Chris Nolan, President of Granite Belt Wine & Tourism (GBWT) to give us insights on tourism in the region, trends in visitation, current campaigns and new developments.

Click the link here to book your ticket to our first networking event of the year!! <https://www.trybooking.com/CYOHC>



Chamber Networking Event

- Tuesday 25 February 2025
- 5:30^{PM} register for 6:00^{PM} start

SPECIAL GUESTS:
Local legend Lyle Kent from Kent's Saddlery
GBWT President Chris Nolan

Includes:
Hot & cold changes
Complimentary drink

Prices:
\$10 - Members
\$15 - Non-Members

KENT SADDLERY 25798 New England Highway, Stanthorpe

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Business Excellence Awards

The Business Excellence Awards held in November was the first held since 2019 and was a great way to showcase the resilience, creativity and hard work of local businesses. That's meaning all of you who collectively are strengthening the region's economy and community ties.

The Awards were co-hosted for the first time with Granite Belt Wine & Tourism (GBWT) and attracted 22 nominations across the 8 categories. Along with all the winners we congratulate Diamondvale Estate for taking out the overall winner on the night. We also express our warm appreciation for the 18 sponsors who helped to make the event a great success.

An in-depth debriefing prompted the idea of hosting the Business Excellence Awards every two years, so the next Awards will be pitched for June 2026, so that they are clear of the Apple & Grape Festival. Put that in your diary folks!!

Why Leave Town Cards

Since 2019 the Chamber has worked alongside Bendigo Bank and their local Community Bank Branch to encourage locals to shop locally using the Why Leave Town (WLT) prepaid cards. Such a great way to keep money in this community and to support our local businesses right across the Granite Belt.

The Chamber used the WLT cards as prizes for our Granite Belt Bush Christmas Shopper docket draws culminating in our Christmas market on Thursday 19 December. Once the four draws were finished, we counted up the value of the dockets and were surprised that they amounted to over \$140,000 of receipts!!! That's a lot of shopping locally in just 4 weeks!! You will hear more about the Why Leave Town cards in February!!



Membership Update

The Chamber's membership has steadily climbed in recent months to 102 members with a diverse range of business reflected in the membership as per the chart below.

The membership sub-committee are looking at ways to develop greater benefits for members, increase the voice of businesses within the Chamber, and strategies to enhance the promotion of business members. Stay tuned for further details soon.



Strategic Plan – review and reporting

The Executive Committee recently met to review and refresh the Chamber's Strategic Plan so that the key priorities for 2025 can be set and worked on. The Strategic Plan was developed in 2022 following extensive research and engagement with the business community, and so it reflects the issues and aspirations of businesses throughout the region.

The current Key Goals include:

- **Goal 1: Strong and sustainable businesses**
- **Goal 2: Liveability and strong identity for the Granite Belt**
- **Goal 3: Assets that enable economic growth**
- **Goal 4: Sustainable organisational, membership and leadership practices**

The Chamber will present the refreshed Strategic Plan to the business community in the near future.
