

DUNGOG DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2021 BUSINESS AWARDS

Recognising excellence, supporting
great service and encouraging quality

JUDGING COMMENTS - WINNERS

ADDISON PARTNERS - PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Addison Partners was established in 1946 and this year celebrates 75 years in business. The firm was established in Dungog and has occupied the same premises since late 1946 (130 Dowling Street). Its team has grown to over 35 across our 4 offices (Dungog, Gloucester, Singleton and Taylors Beach) and Addison Partners has been named in the Australian Financial Review Top 100 Accounting firms for the last 3 years. This is an incredible feat for a firm located in regional NSW.

Their team has played a huge role in the longevity and success of the firm. On its board, Mark Peper has been with the firm for over 30 years and Jane Thomson will celebrate this milestone in 2022. Stuart Berry has worked in and run accounting firms in Dungog for over 20 years. They are supported by a dedicated team of experienced and qualified accountant client service administrators. A long-time supporter of the Dungog District Chamber of Commerce, Addison Partners is this year's Professional Award category winner.

BILLIE AND GRACE – ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY

Billie & Grace's decision to source their products from other small Australian businesses including a fabric printer in QLD has been a huge bonus to their brand and their sustainability efforts. Finding new ways to ensure offcuts don't end up in landfills and launching "Pre Loved Treasures" in store & online has been a huge draw card as well. People can now sell their Billie & Grace labels back for a percentage of what they paid and then they can sell them as Pre Loved Wears for a fraction of "New garment" pricing. So being sustainable and also economical makes good business sense for families with growing children that otherwise may not have any purpose for the clothes once the kids have outgrown them.

CHIC AND ANTIQUE - PEOPLES CHOICE

Chris along with Jo have made this business stand out with product and service. Well deserving of the Peoples Choice Award. Here is a sample of customer nomination.

Chic & Antique opened in Dungog when the main street was seemingly bare of interesting shops to visit and apart from people purchasing life's essentials there was not really much to see retail wise. With the provision of variety, and quality products of interest, Chic & Antique has become well known as a shop to visit, not only in the immediate area but people come from far afield to view and purchases

this shops wares. During the COVID lockdown when the shop was closed, the proprietor, Christine Ahearn, took to social media and formed quite a following through the shops facebook promotions. Following this and upon re-opening, Chic & Antique's online followers came to visit Dungog through Christine's continual promotion of the Dungog township as a place to visit. Other interesting stores have opened, taking the lead of Chic & Antique and rejuvenating the town providing interesting items of craft, clothing and personal well-being. Chic & Antique is a very friendly business to visit with a wonderful environment, friendly and exceptional

This is a small business but it provides excellent products in an inviting atmosphere and the employees are pleasant and helpful. They are very willing to help with online orders and purchases arrive quickly and wrapped with care and artistry.

DUNGOG BY DESIGN – RETAIL AND PERSONAL SERVICES

Dungog By Design is wonderful gallery, stocked with high quality artworks professionally displayed, and locally made. They present a great representation of the work of the wonderfully talented pool of artists we have in our Shire.

Their following on social media has increased over the last 12 months, after taking advantage of workshops organised by Chamber.

An element which makes the gallery a stand out is that each time you enter the gallery you meet one of the makers who are on roster duty. These makers are local people and great ambassadors for the Shire, assisting the many visitors come through their door.

DUNGOG NATURAL HEALTH CLINIC - OVERALL EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS

Maree Longbottom opened her clinic in January 2001 with the mission statement:

My aim at the clinic is to provide you with complete wholistic health care..... using the triangle of your life/ circumstances. This is as unique as you are, we are all different, therefore the treatment is different for all.

Since opening, Maree has continued to study and gain further qualifications which has improved the services that she provides. Maree says *"this in turn has changed my idea on whom my target market would be. The community of Dungog has been my market, they have continued to support me and I feel that I have been able to provide to them what they also need. I have received flowers every week for 20 years from a client, I receive surprises left on my desk, they can range from a bag of homemade biscuits to a hand crotchet hand towel. Many of my clients pop in just to have a chat, some need a hug, and that is what I give them. Having a business in a small country town is much more than the annual turnover, I feel it is being part of the community, being there to support them as much as they support me. My aim now, is to be able to have the clinic continue in this format, to continue to be an integral of the community, to be part of the heart of the town, a town that is both unique and special."*

The longevity of Dungog Natural Health Clinic speaks volumes for the standard of treatment, Maree's compassion and her ability to dispense treatment on an individual basis. Being part of the community and her intention to continue this service through her clinic makes her a very worthy recipient of Overall excellence in Business.

JUST BEEN LAID – RURAL AND MANUFACTURING

Sarah Sivyer from Lockstock owns and runs this very successful business in our Shire. It is a great example of farming businesses striving to produce organic product and succeeding. This nomination comment really says it all.

Just Been Laid is a credit to the area - the business and their pasture raised eggs are well regarded in Newcastle and I see a number of mentions on websites promoting they use Just Been Laid eggs (Bocados Spanish Kitchen in Newcastle East and Uprising Bakery in Maryville for example) which again brings credit to the area. Sarah's sustainable farm practices also deserve credit, along with her marketing skills and promoting the business (and therefore the area) via a number of channels including the Newcastle Herald. She is also continually seeking new ways of diversifying her farm income.

MEG'S KITCHEN OUTSTANDING NEW BUSINESS

Meg's Kitchen has been operating for just under a year. This innovative business provides fresh baked whole foods, using only local chemical free produce. It runs a green kitchen meaning there is no food scraps going to land fill and has a return and recycle offering on the drink bottles. Service is always friendly, with 3 full time staff and 2 casual, all fill by local people.

For Megan Garnham, opening up this café in Dungog, offering different style of food was a risk and compounded by problems brought by covid, navigating new safety regulations and lock downs. This business has been able to turn all those negatives into a big positive being a shining example of an outstanding new business.

Customer nomination comment:

Megs Kitchen is a breath of fresh air to the Dungog Shire! This whole foods cafe is filled with delicious handmade goods using local produce focussing on healthy wholesome food. When you step into Meg's Kitchen you are greeted with friendly faces, full of enthusiasm and food and coffee simply matches. People travel to Dungog to sample Meg and Hayley's amazing creations offering an entire Dungog Experience when they visit. They are up early cooking away to provide amazing food, straight from the heart. Their focus on the environment and advocating sustainability in hospitality is simply first class like no other in shire.

RAY WHITE CLARENCE TOWN AND DUNGOG – SMALL BUSINESS 6 OR MORE EMPLOYEES

Dee Braithwaite and her team strive to make their real estate business one that supports their clients. They measure their success via their documented customer satisfaction surveys.

'Feedback allows us to review our current systems and processes, to continue doing things we are getting positive feedback on, and to review things we are getting negative feedback on. These present us with learning opportunities for our team and can be used in conjunction with our team training days to review our processes and procedures.'

Principal, Dee Braithwaite, is recognized as an Elite Salesperson with recognition in the top 2% of salespeople across 1000 offices in the Ray White network.

Scott Hunter from their office was also awarded Premier status within the Ray White network which places him in the top 10% of salespeople in the network.

Congratulations to the Team from Ray White Clarence Town and Dungog on your achievements and being a part of our business community. Here are a few customer comments:

Dee and her team are incredibly professional, proactive and knowledgeable. As new to the area, we found Dee, Rob and the team very helpful and understanding.

Dee Braithwaite's team at Ray White made the process of buying a rural property as painless as possible. They responded quickly and comprehensively to our many queries, they were very accommodating with regard to inspection requests, they put us in touch with a range of local service providers for works we needed to undertake and they have continued to support us in our goal to make Dungog our home and in due course, our business

RIDE DUNGOG - COMMUNITY SERVICES

The team at Ride Dungog have achieved exceptional results giving a real boost to the community with its foresight to install the two mountain biking flow tracks on Dungog Common. Not only has this increased visitor numbers to our Shire hugely, with a flow on effect to local businesses, it has given another reason for our youth to get out to the Common and get active.

This has all been achieved by a committed team of volunteers giving back to their community. Their projects are the most exciting to happen in our shire for a very long time.

SASSAFRAS – ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sourcing locally and handmade wherever possible remains their biggest ticket to being as sustainable as possible, by reducing their carbon footprint and not relying on mass produced items from faraway places. This is something they continue to work towards improving. They also carry a line of Fair Work Trade certified hand felted toys that is highly sustainable and also ethically produced whilst helping communities in Nepal have ethical employment.

In store use of recycled wrapping paper, recycled brown paper bags and environmentally friendly sticky tapes, bio degradable bubble wrap etc. Special touch to wrapping is using the fabric offcuts from Billie & Grace.

SCULPTURE ON THE FARM – TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

Excellence in showcasing sculptures and Dungog Shire.

Sculpture on the Farm Dungog has been held successfully over the 4 days of the October long weekend during both 2018 and 2019 attracting attendance from just over 2,000 visitors to Dungog and to the exhibition at 'Fosterton' on each occasion. In addition to the great local support, people came from a variety of areas, mostly from within NSW including Newcastle/Port Stephens area, Greater Sydney and of course other parts of the Hunter Valley.

For this coming October plans were well under way for a 10 day event expanding also to 3 more locations Gallery on Dowling Dungog by Design Royal Hotel Dungog. A 150 sculptures were selected for the show. With Covid restrictions again planned event was morphed by its creative organisers into an on line event. This on line presence will be very active before and during the 10 days.

Planned Promotion

To this end we plan to bring our audience to Dungog during the 10 days of the exhibition, via the daily uploading of short colour video clips of various scenic locations from around the Dungog shire plus a range of agricultural "shorts" showcasing everything from beef cattle breeding and dairy farming to thoroughbred horse breeding

SHINE HAIR AND BEAUTY – SMALL BUSINESS 2-5 EMPLOYEES

Sonia Bowden purchased the business 2 ½ years ago after working in Shine Hair and Beauty for a number of years. Sonia has put her own stamp on this business by moving to larger premises in Clarence Town 12 months ago. Sonia was able to maintain the clientele and grow it with extra training for her staff and letting each take ownership of their position.

A professional and well run business delivering great service as endorsed by the following customer and staff nomination comments:

Shine Hair and Beauty offers a wonderful professional service. I always feel indulged and pampered when I visit. Sonia and the girls are always looking to improve and innovate.

Customer nomination comment

I'm nominating the Shine Hair and Beauty family, not only for the welcoming atmosphere, excellent customer service and amazing services they bring to life but for how professional, knowledgeable and informative they are throughout all aspects of their professions. I feel privileged to be a part of such an amazing team at Shine.

Shine Team Member

THE BARRACKS, Tocal - CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service for the historical The Barracks Tocal accommodation has been achieved with careful planning, and well trained staff, with their attention to detail. Their smooth booking process, welcoming check in and hassle-free checkout gave guests the opportunity to rest and relax throughout their entire stay. A result of their success has seen a rise in consecutive stay nights, returning guests and an increase in last minute bookings. Customer reviews definitely reflect their satisfaction, including this one:

A perfect stay. Beautiful stay in such an important landmark of Australian history. Delicious and fresh breakfast hamper provided to us but the best part was the tour by the caretaker, Michael. Michael was passionate, knowledgeable and the nicest a person can be, showing us the entire property and Tocal Homestead. We even got to see 1 week old piglets he had been raising. A real special treat. Highly, highly recommended. Booking.com – Tony – June 2021.

UP THE CREEK PLUMBING – TRADES AND CONSTRUCTION

Daniel Cornford, owner of Up the Creek Plumbing, was the sole employee at the start of 2020. He had set a 5 year goal to build to a team of 4 tradesmen. Over the past year has managed to add 4 quality employees and currently seeking a 5th. This was made possible by repeat clients and securing a contract installing plumbing on new school buildings

Up the Creek Plumbing is active in the community providing work experience for local schools and supporting community events. Fantastic result in growth for a small business and a valuable part of community.

CHARLIE BOYTON – OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEE UNDER 21

An example of the many glowing comments regarding Charlie from customers –

Any employer should be thrilled to have Charlie as an employee. She performs her duties always with a smile on her face and goes out of her way to help both young and older customers. Having seen many local youngsters begin their employment path at the IGA, Charlie stands out in my eyes can be seen doing between serving the customers, she is doing it.

NINA WILLIAMS - OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEE OVER 21

This speaks volumes of Nina's ability and compassion - Employers response to judge's question

1. Describe this employee's milestone achievements over the past 12 months:

The Dungog Shire Community Centre holds the contract from Services Australia to provide assistance with Centrelink, Medicare and other Federal government services for our local community. During Covid, while many people retreated to working from home, the agency actually extended its hours to assist people to access the various Covid payments they needed and Nina provided this support. This included many people who had not previously needed to access government support so they needed assistance with their identification requirements, linking with MyGov and Centrelink, submitting applications etc for the first time. During this time Nina also realised that many people were reluctant to use the agency computers (despite them being carefully sanitised between clients) so she encouraged them to bring their own devices to the Centre where she then trained them to access MyGov on their own phone, tablet or laptop so they could do that from home if they did not wish to venture out. This meant that she needed to teach herself to use many different devices in order to better assist her clients, many of whom have only limited technology skills.