

Willunga Farmers Market AGM 2022

CHAIR REPORT

This year the market turned 20. We marked the event with a cooking demonstration from Jordan Theodoris and Karena Armstrong and an appropriately elaborate cake from Soul Food and delightfully decorated cupcakes from Tealicious. We would not have reached this milestone without a huge amount of work by numerous people over the years who have worked as managers, taken the responsibility of being office bearers, served on the board or volunteered to work on market day. On behalf of all of us who have benefitted over the years thank you to all of you and especially Zannie Flanagan and Jude McBain who were integral to our establishment.

Which leads me to those who are keeping the home fires burning. I would like to thank all the people who ensure we deliver our fabulous market every week.

To the core staff, Jenni, Richard and Linda, we thank them for their continuing hard work, flexibility and support for the board, stall holders and members. It is not always an easy task I know. In short, they have done a sterling job. And on market days, Heather, Ben, Solomon and Geri ensure we are up and running in an organised and safe fashion, we thank them all very much for being part of the team.

To the volunteers – every year I say this but that doesn't mean I am less sincere in when I say again, we couldn't do without them. The assistance they offer with set up and pack down and valuable customer liaison are all invaluable and very much appreciated.

To the board, also volunteers to the cause, thank you for generously giving of your time, experience, expertise and ideas. This year has been challenging and to some degree each month has been ground hog day. We have however undertaken careful considerations and made some difficult decisions. I have very much appreciated working with you all – you are a very caring, constructive and effective group. I would like to especially thank the three departing directors, Glenn Fitzpatrick, Michael Taylor and Megan Sherry. Glenn who has served on the board for several 2-year terms has given us great guidance in the HR area and been a very good go between with stall holders over many issues that have arisen over the years. Thank you Glenn. Michael, who came to us as a recipient of the Farmer's scholarship, has provided us with some invaluable ideas and solutions thanks to his keen mind and lateral thinking. Thank you for assisting us out of many a maze! Megan has been a candid and strong advocate for all matters stallie. We will miss the commonsense approach she brought to our discussions. Thank you to you as well Megan.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Willunga High School for 1) inviting us to operate our market from their campus in 2021 and 2) for their ongoing support in the past year. Now that we have made the decision to remain at the site for the foreseeable future (more on this later) we propose to find ways of working collaboratively with the school and the students in the coming years.

And finally, to Peat Soils and their Bio bin thank for your assistance in our quest to continually improve our waste disposal and lessen our impact on the environment.

Wilmark Awards

The 2021 Wilmark Awards were held again as is the annual practice. The very well supported and successful awards dinner was held in the hospitality area of the high school with food prepared by Todd Steele from local ingredients, many sourced from the stall holders at the market. As the only opportunity for the total market community to get together in a convivial environment this event is very valuable. We propose to again celebrate the 2022 awards at the same venue with the food being prepared by Todd.

Book your tickets. They will sell like hot cakes!

Stall Movements

As is normal we have had the following stalls leave us this year: Heirloom Harvest, Krautkopf (hot food stall), Willunga Gelato, Sam's Veggies, Second Valley Cheese, Golden Child Wines, Kanoetree Wines, Mrs Cluck's Eggs, McCaul's Olive Oil and Najobe Park Red Angus

The reasons for the departures are many and varied

And new to the market this year are the following stalls: Narnaja Orchards, Petal & Green, Ampale Olives, Heathy Sparkle, Starlight Springs (a welcome return), The Local Fish, Crikey Tucker, Hidden Valley Orchards, Braeburn Farms (scholarship recipient), Meadow to Plate, Swell Brewing, Two Conscious Cooks, Basket Range Bakers, Coffin Bay Oyster Co, Golden Granola, Heisker Wagyu, Lovely Truffles (one week only), South Coast Brewing and Willunga Quality Meats

Welcome to all

Scholarship

I am very happy to report that the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board continues to partner with us in awarding the Farmer's Scholarship. Last year's recipients, Braeburn Farm are now trading and this year the scholarship was awarded to 'Worms of Willunga' We look forward to seeing their products at the market in due course.

Financial Position

I will leave the details of our financial position to our treasurer, Chelsea Holmes who will deliver her report shortly. I will just comment that despite the financial impost we have experienced this year due the costs of setting up at our new site and the challengers our stallholders have had to manage I am comfortable that we are financially strong and will get back on track in the coming year. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Chelsea

for the work she does for us on a monthly basis. We are very fortunate to have a busy self-employed accountant volunteering her time to the market board. Her presence gives us great confidence.

The Site

I have left this issue which has dominated much of our activity and thoughts this year as the last matter to address in my annual report.

As I am sure you are all aware at its August meeting the board made the decision to remain at the Willunga High School site. This decision was not made lightly and was the result of extensive canvassing of stakeholder views and exploration of the means of returning to the one site at the Town Square. We were acutely aware that in the short term our decision would affect the Willunga township. In short it was a difficult decision.

The actions taken to inform the decision were:

- Surveys of the stall holders and the broader shopper members
- Engagement of Peter Joy consulting to assist the board in taking a dispassionate look at the essence of the market, our purpose, our priorities and our future needs. The conversations about the site decision which have dominated board discussions were often influenced by the heart and not the head. It was important that we had assistance to take a fresh look at our priorities.
- Engagement of Peter Joy Consulting to conduct 2 workshops, one with stall holders and one with shoppers to ascertain their views on the essence, purpose and priorities of the market. It was not the purpose of these sessions to discuss the site issue directly but rather to give the board information on which to base its decision. We are very grateful to those who took the time to participate.
- Consultation of the Willunga residents who would be affected by the suggested close of the bottom section of St Peter's Terrace conducted by the City of Onkaparinga

The notes from all of these sessions and the outcome of the road closure consultation are available to interested members from the market office.

In making the decision the key factors the board took into account were as follows;

- Our obligations under our constitution the objectives of which are to ensure the successful and continued development of the Willunga Farmers Market, to support by means of the market, the production and sale of fresh local seasonal produce of the Fleurieu Peninsula and to promote wherever possible the practice of sustainable food production on the Fleurieu Peninsula.
- The ability to increase and decrease the footprint of the market as circumstances require
- The understanding that the country is still operating in a pandemic

- The necessity to have the space to increase our stall offerings and to mount food focussed events thereby positioning the market for sustainability for the next 20 years.
- The limitations of the Town Square site that were beginning to become evident prior to the onset of the pandemic
- The costs associated with expansion of the Town Square through a road closure

The timing of the decision was determined by two factors:

- The commitment we made to the market community that we would review the move to the High School after a year which was up in July/August this year
- The need to clarify our position for the sake of the staff, the stall holders and the Willunga township.

This decision will now allow us to focus on the many other factors requiring the attention of the board and the staff.

The larger space and the easing of the COVID restrictions has allowed us to begin re-introducing presentations and workshops as part of our regular market offerings which we will augment in the future. As we continually do, we will focus on attracting stall holders particularly in the fresh categories. And as I mentioned earlier, we will work on devising ways to collaborate more with the school and the students.

We will now put all our energy into continuing to improve the site and most importantly to ensure we develop the 'heart' of the market that we all enjoy. We are fortunate to have this large site and need to learn to make the best use of it.

So finally thank you all and not least, thank you shoppers. Thank you for supporting our farmers and makers regardless of where they are located. They are the reason we exist. However, without you we wouldn't have a market so thank you for following us down the road this year and please keep shopping and cooking!