

Benalla Sustainable Future Group.

Benalla Food Cooperative Annual Report May 2021-May 2022.

The Benalla Food Co-op celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2021. 2021 also saw a change in co-ordinators and a luncheon was held in July between lockdowns to thank Christine Holmes for her decade of co-ordinating the Co-op. Christine was given a Life Membership in recognition of her contribution.

The Co-op Committee has met during the pandemic year via zoom and in person when possible. Our main business has been COVID compliance. We sought advice from Council in order to navigate through the everchanging Government requirements relating to hygiene, masks, vaccinations, personal distancing and cleaning, resulting in a safe environment for customers and assistants. Adhering to regulations and being COVID cautious has resulted in some ongoing rostering problems for Christine, and not everyone has been happy with us all the time.

Amidst COVID and lockdowns, a Click & Collect service was initiated. This allows the unwell, the vaccination hesitant, COVID avoidant or super busy another shopping option.

The Co-op now has a business email address foodcoopbenalla@gmail.com Thanks Peter Maddock.

During the year the Co-op successfully applied for a Benalla Rural City \$2,500 grant (thanks Kate Holmes) for a new fridge. After much research by Christine Holmes, an Australian Williams commercial fridge with double glass doors was purchased for \$4,207.50. The fridge arrived in December and has been invaluable during summer as we experienced an infestation of pantry moths and weevils. The insect invasion resulted in the shop being emptied and thoroughly cleaned in an endeavoured to conquer and destroy. Our efforts appear to have been successful however will require ongoing monitoring and excellent hygiene to avoid further problems.

Food Co-op accounts are managed by Peter Holmes. We have 118 items and members pay via Square or cash. A large majority of members use Square.

A book launch was held in December for Jade Miles, founder of the Beechworth Co-op and owner of Black Barn Farm at Stanley. This was an outdoor event and Jade's book 'Futuresteading' was promoted and sold during the morning.

The Co-op farewelled one of our committee members Loren Atkinson, Loren and her family have relocated to the United States. Karen Nankervis was welcomed into the committee; Karen comes to us from the Beechworth Co-op and brings IT and governance skills.

The Co-op is grateful to Graeme Greed for maintaining our equipment, servicing scales, and keeping an eye on the fridge.

Rhona keeps members informed with news via weekly email updates. The BSFG website has Food Co-op information. Enquires and feedback are welcome via this website or our business email.

In closing, I would like to thank the Food Co-op community for having me coordinate the group over the past 12 months and for the wonderful assistance given whenever asked.

The Co-op is run by members who generously volunteer their time, attending to the many tasks required to keep a shop running. We are a diverse group of humans, and we endeavour to do our very best. Thank you all for your patience as I learn Co-op coordinating skills, the intricacies of ordering and moderate my hyper COVID vigilance.

Susanne Bennett, Food Coop Coordinator.