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CROSS BORDER CHAMBER SETS A NEW AGENDA FOR THE SUCCESS

WORDS
JOHN DOOLEY

A LARGE cross section of Sunraysia's businesses and community leaders attended the recent launch of the Mildura-Wentworth Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MWCCI) held at the Mildura Powerhouse Precinct on Tuesday, March 24.

Guest speakers included business leaders from both sides of the Murray River, including Business NSW general manager of membership, strategy and partnerships, Dan Macias, and Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive, Sally Curtain.

Ms Curtain spoke glowingly about the emergence of another chamber of commerce in the region.

"My organisation is really delighted and thrilled to be part of this really clever initiative," she said. "What we're hoping to do tonight is not just about relaunching the chamber, it's about something bigger. It's about restoring the voice - the voice of business here in this wonderful region."

MWCCI CEO, Peter Alexander, was delighted with the attendance and the diversity of people attending the launch saying it was a wonderful time for the region to see so many people, from both sides of the river, coming together with a mutual desire to see some positive initiatives and outcomes.



MWCCI CEO Peter Alexander welcomes guests to the economic outlook breakfast.

"What a great turnout. I think just under 200 people have attended tonight, including lot of business owners," he said. "We have solid support from both sides of the river. The guest speakers were just brilliant. While our main objective is about engaging businesses, but not only the nuts and bolts of business, it's about demonstrating that we are here to make a significant contribution to the region. We are about being one region - one voice. A voice that doesn't just only represent the Mildura and Wentworth partnership, but it includes the partnership of other support groups."







The MWCCI launch at the Powerhouse Precinct.

By involving Wentworth in the new chamber, it is hoped to shine a light on the many stakeholders and businesses who can bring ideas to the table and benefit from the collaborative approach the chamber is taking, proponents say.

Daniel Linklater is one of the Wentworth steering committee members who is passionate about the cross-border collaboration being successful.

"I think, like a lot of things we're better off... we're stronger when we work together," he said.

"By working together, we'll have more economic clout and more reason to be listened to. That's why I think it's a really good idea."

Mildura Rural City Council Councillor Rebecca Crossling also attended the launch and was equally enthusiastic about the opportunities the MWCCI can bring to the region, and how it can complement council's economic development strategy.

"Whilst council's Economic Development Strategy focuses on five pillars where we can influence economic development, they are quite different to the chamber's day-to day initiatives aimed at supporting individual businesses," Cr Crossling said.

The fact that Wentworth represents a significant businesses, collectively producing an output of $10.35 billion, is something that is not lost on the MWCCI.

Mildura solicitor John Irwin is known for his strong advocacy in advancing the region and has some 'big-picture' projects that he has put onto the agenda for serious discussion.

Speaking to *Heartbeat*, he said: "We are actually - you and I and the other 170 people gathered here - witnessing history. Never before have this many people come together with excitement knowing that this Chamber of Commerce is going to make changes in the future," he said. "I've never felt quite so excited since I proposed to my wife. She turned me down the first time too, but that's another matter!"

Following the success of the launch and chamber membership being embraced widely, MWCCI hosted an Economic Outlook Breakfast at the Quality Mildura Grand Hotel on Wednesday, June 10.

Like the launch, it was well attended with more than 100 businesses and community stakeholders and chamber members coming together to listen to keynote speakers including Bendigo Bank's Chief Economist, David Robertson.

David spoke about the general state of the economy, both federally and at a state level, and made 10 predictions about the future including where interest rates may go.

He was then joined by Member for Mildura, Jade Benham, for a Q&A session moderated by Peter Alexander.



The Business Breakfast.





