

Congratulations.

At the 2014 **Community Bank**[®] National Conference, Neerim District Financial Services Limited was inducted into the **Community Bank**[®] Hall of Fame for its “**Outstanding contribution to Community Banking in Australia**”. The award was collected by Paul Bright, Chairman, Susan Allen, Deputy Chair, Tim Kubale, Director and Tony Allen, Executive Officer

This accolade for our company and branch has been the result of some long and tiresome work, by some dedicate people who had the foresight to see the great benefits which flow from having a **Community Bank**[®] branch in their area.

The following is a brief outline of the nomination for the award.



Notice of AGM

Neerim District Financial Services Limited

When: 7pm, Thursday 30 October 2014

Where: Phoenix Room, Neerim South
Recreation Reserve

RSVP: All welcome

Neerim District Financial Services Limited
ABN 46 091 832 923 (S49721) (08/14)

Neerim District
Financial Services Limited



Hall of fame nomination overview



The Neerim District **Community Bank**[®] Branch opened its doors for business in July 2000 but the idea for its formation arose a year earlier.

At that time, the community was concerned banking services in the district would disappear altogether following the closure of bank branches in the district. In 1999 Bendigo Bank encouraged the community to open its own branch through the **Community Bank**[®] model.

The process saw the community form a public company to operate the branch under a franchise from Bendigo Bank. A steering committee worked tirelessly to promote the creation of the **Community Bank**[®] branch, to stimulate local interest and, finally, to raise the necessary capital for the project to proceed.

Prior to its opening the company Chairman, Paul Bright announced at a public forum that “if successful the branch may reach footings of \$25 million”; today the branch has reached in excess of \$115 million. The branch has over 2,100 customers and its ATM handles over 3,000 transactions per month increasing during the winter months with people stopping on their way to the Mt Baw Baw snowfields.

Since reaching profit in 2004 the branch has returned more than \$1.8 million back to the community through grants and sponsorships. The original shareholders, who still hold their shares, have also had their principle returned to them in the form of dividends.

The branch employs six staff members and the company employs a part time Executive Officer. In 2013 the company purchased land in the town of Neerim South to erect a purpose built branch and Community Business Centre. At that time the branch had outgrown its rented building. The Community Business Centre is used regularly by community groups for meetings and forums.

How does the company make its decisions based on good governance?



In 2012 the Board initiated a project to develop a “Directors Handbook” which is provided to all Directors upon appointment. The Handbook is found on their iPad’s which each Director is given. All documents and reports for Board meetings and committee meetings are shared with Directors using Google Drive on the iPads.

In addition to general information regarding the roles of Directors the Handbook contains all relevant policies and procedures which have been adopted by the Board. These policies and procedures are regularly reviewed by the Board.

The Board meets monthly to receive reports from Officers, staff and committees. All Board members have a role on at least one committee. Prospective new Directors are required

to attend at least two to three Board meetings as observers prior to being formally asked to joining the Board.

Currently the Board has a full compliment of Directors with four new Directors being appointed in the past 12 months. The current Board has a good spread of youth and experience. In addition to the branch staff the company employs an experienced administrator as its Executive Officer / Company Secretary. This appointment, made in 2010, has taken a great deal of stress off the volunteer Directors and has meant all statutory requirements are being met on time and the administration of the company runs smoothly.

What investment has the company made to grow the future capacity of the community?

In 2013 the Board made the decision to relocate the branch to a more suitable site. After much debate a property in the Neerim South shopping centre was purchased and a new purpose built building incorporating a branch, Community Business Centre and company office was erected. This building was officially opened with great fanfare in October 2013.

The erection of this building has provided a real focus for the town. Community groups now have a place to meet in a purpose built meeting room equipped with the latest audio visual equipment.

The company has also installed a high-speed colour printer / photocopier which is made available for community groups to produce newsletters, flyers and posters up to A3 size. At this point in time community groups are not charged for any printing which is done for them.

The Board has also committed to working closely with community organisations such as The Neerim District Progress Association and the Lions Club of Neerim & District. The Board also provides representatives to sit on project committees being conducted in the district especially where funding has been provided. At the current time the Board is assisting with the Development of wetlands in Neerim South and the Neerim South Small Towns Art Transformation Project (Neerim Bower Project).

What significant relationships and partnerships have been developed to assist the business?

In 2011 the three **Community Bank**[®] branches in the Baw Baw Shire (Neerim District, Drouin and Trafalgar) in conjunction with Bendigo Bank Regional Office and Baw Baw Shire Council formed an alliance known as the Baw Baw Partnership to meet regularly to discuss topics of mutual interest and to see where collaboration on projects could be enhanced. The partnership group meets monthly. One result of this partnership has been the elimination of duplication of applications for community grants and more collaborative funding.

The Neerim District Progress Association, which has recently been revitalised has been successful in obtaining several large grants for community projects all of which have been supported by funds by the Company. The group is a major user of the Community Business Centre and Community printing service.

As a **Community Bank**[®] branch we are regularly approached to support clubs, organisations and individuals. We always treat these approaches on their merits but we treat sponsorships as a partnership not just a donation. All groups who now want ongoing support from us are now asked to sign agreements which specify not only what we will do for them but also what they will do for us to assist us grow our business.

This process has been warmly and widely received by most organisations and has often resulted in clubs making suggestions to improve our visibility to their members and thus grow our business.

How does your company assist the youth of the district?



The Neerim District was one of the first sites chosen for the establishment of a Youth Foundation in Victoria. The company in conjunction with the Victorian Government

provided funds to establish a corpus of money to enable the youth of the district to develop youth led project to benefit local youth.

Whilst the government is no longer involved the Youth Foundation - Neerim District is still going strong. Currently the program is being coordinated by a volunteer steering committee headed by two Directors from the Board. The Youth Foundation - Neerim District has a close working relationship with the Primary and Secondary schools in the area plus works closely with the Neerim District Progress Association, The Lions Club of Neerim & District and The Neerim South Community House under whose auspices many of the projects are funded.

As a result of the formation of the Neerim District Youth Foundation one of the original participants, who went along because free food was on offer, has now become a Director of Neerim District Financial Services Limited, Samantha Charles was only 20 when she joined the Board in 2012.

In addition to the support given to the Youth Foundation the Company supports many youth orientated projects. Currently the company is a sponsor of the L2P program being run out of Warragul, has sponsored the Forest Edge Music Festival, Neerim South Skate Park and most sporting clubs in the district. In 2012 the Company assisted students from the Neerim District Secondary College visit China to further the schools relationship with its sister school.

How has the community benefitted from the establishment of the branch?

Since its establishment the Neerim District Financial Services Limited has distributed more than \$1.8 million back to the Neerim District in the form of grants, sponsorships and donations.



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Currently the company sponsors three AFL football clubs, three Netball clubs, three cricket clubs, a junior Basketball club, two tennis clubs, a bowls club and a pony club. The company is also the major sponsor of many individual events and projects including the annual production by the Warragul Theatre Company, the annual Neerim Country Show, the annual Mt Baw Baw "Archibawbaw" portrait prize and the biennial Neerim District Bower Public Arts Prize.

Grants to community groups have resulted in improvements to many community assets including:

- A new wetlands for Neerim South
- Improvements to the Neerim District Soldiers Memorial Hospital facilities and equipment
- The Noojee Heritage Centre
- The Orana Centre (after school hours facility) at Neerim South Primary School
- Defibrillators donated to sporting groups and CFA units and Police
- All seasons bowling rinks at Neerim South Bowls Club
- Music studio at Neerim District Secondary College

The company also sponsors the Baw Baw Big Blokes BBQ in support of men's health annually.



How has the district changed through the establishment of the Community Bank® branch?

Where would Neerim District be without it's **Community Bank®** branch? Probably not the thriving small town it is today. "When banks leave



so does the heart of a town." While we admit that some businesses have gone the town is still growing. Residential construction is booming with many new families being welcomed into our community.

Many of the clubs and organisations who have benefitted from our grants and support would not have survived without a **Community Bank®** branch. Businesses in the district are reliant on the branch for their banking and cash. With the nearest banks over 20 kilometres away in Warragul it is doubtful if these businesses would survive without access to their local branch.

With the erection of the new building in 2013 the town's facade has changed. The location of the building next to the supermarket has created a 'Town Square' atmosphere where a "Community BBQ" is held each Saturday and is envisaged as the site for a regular "Alley Farmers Market" to be established in the near future.

How does your company share its knowledge across the Community Bank® network?

Directors and staff from Neerim District are regular attendees at state and national conferences and workshops. The Executive Officer of the company, Mr Tony Allen, is the representative for the Gippsland East region on the Victorian regional Collaborative Marketing Committee.



Recently representatives from four **Community Bank®** branches in West Gippsland (Drouin, Neerim District, Bunyip and Trafalgar) met at the instigation of Neerim District to develop a collaborative advertising campaign in the local print media.

Neerim District was responsible for the development of a collaborative sponsorship arrangement with the Gippsland AFL umpires Association. This brought together Neerim District, Bunyip, KooWeeRup and Lang Lang branches. The Drouin, Trafalgar, Neerim District and Bunyip Boards jointly support the annual Baw Baw Garden Expo.

Be part of something bigger.

BIG Bendigo Benefits is an exciting package of products and services designed to benefit members of organisation and our local community.

Drop into your nearest branch at **143 – 145 Main Neerim Road, Neerim South** or phone **5628 1079** for more details on the discounted rates, waived fees and bonus cover available.

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Neerim District Community Bank® Branch

143 Main Neerim Road Neerim South VIC 3831

Phone: 5628 1079

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm and Saturday mornings 9.00am – 12 noon

Website: www.bendigobank.com.au/neerim

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