

2012  
International  
Year of



## Co-operatives AUSTRALIA

### What's the difference?

To the outside world co-operatives may look like any other business – commercially successful, profitable and productive. What exactly is it that sets them apart? What makes the co-operative not only “a good way to do business” but also a better way?

1. **Co-operatives are owned and run by their members.** The people who benefit from the services of the co-operative are also the owners. They have a say in how the business is managed and share equally in the profits. One member has one vote
2. **Co-operatives are not hostage to the whims of external shareholders.** Co-operatives trade successfully in the market. The freedom from external investors means they can focus on making sure their members get the best possible service, prices and benefits. All profits are reinvested back into the business
3. **Co-operatives provide their members with mutual support,** linking them together by sharing ideas, costs, equipment and networks. Co-operatives strive to achieve mutual goals through co-operation
4. **The co-operative model is viable for meeting both our economic and social needs,** rather than a slavish devotion to the corporations' goals of maximising profit, growth and short-term gains
5. **Co-operatives have proven more resilient in economic downturns.** Co-operatives do their best work when times are tough, sharing burdens together and protecting disadvantaged communities. They have to face the toughest of competition when times are good, a fact co-op members may overlook when offered opportunistic short-term deals from competitors
6. **Co-operatives bring together individuals for economic gain,** increasing the market power of people who on their own could achieve much less. They aggregate the purchasing power, capital and the resources of their members through the co-operative structure
7. **Co-operatives are not charity.** They are a powerful model for reducing inequality, fighting poverty and disadvantage through self-empowerment and solidarity
8. **Co-operatives grow their members,** with a long tradition of providing members with training and education and the chance to develop their skills in running the businesses that they own
9. **Co-operatives are an international movement,** with millions of co-operatives making a difference around the world every day



### Recommendations

Our favourite resource is the *10 Reasons Co-ops Rock* Poster and *Co-opoly: The game of Cooperatives* available from <http://coopolygame.com/>

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