

CO-OPERATIVE & MUTUAL BUSINESS LEADERS SUMMIT

COMMUNIQUÉ

Canberra, 17 August 2011

Co-operative, credit union and mutual business leaders, meeting in Canberra were strongly supportive of a representative body for the social business sector that could occupy a similar position in the political landscape to the Business Council of Australia.

The Summit found that co-operatives and mutuals, shared a common bond built on ethical and social values and could act as a strong united 'counterbalance' to the influence of investor-driven companies on economic and business issues in Australia.

The Summit also found that in spite of scale and contribution to GDP, member-owned businesses were in urgent need of a unified voice and a national peak body through which sector wide issues could be addressed at the national level.

Summit participants discussed the challenges for the sector and meeting those challenges. The focus was on initiatives that can make a real difference and on the opportunities to influence politicians and other decision makers to increase investment and growth in Australia's social business sector.

The areas a representative body could address included:

- Promoting the growth and preservation of the co-operative and mutual business model
- Improved business efficiency, scale and distribution
- Tax reform
- Industrial relations
- Business advisory and centralised business services

COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES BUILD A BETTER WORLD



- Improved governance practices
- Improved regulation
- Research and information
- A strong influence on economic and cross-sector business issues

The Summit was convened by the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives (IYC) 2012 National Steering Committee (<http://www.socialbusiness.coop/international-year-of-cooperatives/>).

Delegates comprised 45 CEOs and Chairs of businesses in the 2011 Top 100 list of Australian co-operatives, credit unions and mutuals (Attached – **Appendix A**). Representatives of community co-operatives and start-ups in the health and renewable energy sectors were in attendance. The Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Treasury were represented.

The Summit was opened by The Hon. David Bradbury, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer. Bradbury, who has special responsibility for competition policy in the Gillard Government, cited his interest in the role played by co-operatives and mutuals in providing a competitive dynamic in the marketplace.

Guests included representatives of Abacus - Australian Mutuals, Co-operatives Australia and Steering Committee Patron, The Hon. Bob Debus AM, Former Attorney-General and Minister for Co-operatives, New South Wales.

The opportunity for IYC 2012 to be a launch pad to re-establish co-operatives and mutuals in the national life was highlighted. Industry contributions to the National IYC 2012 Appeal would fund a national public awareness campaign in 2012, a Strategic Review to develop a roadmap for the sector going forward, and resources to support state, regional and local activities in 2012.

\$A170,000 of a total \$A600,000 budget has been raised thus far in voluntary contributions to the National IYC 2012 Appeal. The industry levy was a sliding scale based on turnover. Co-operatives, mutuals and credit unions will consider their individual commitments over the coming months. Contributions of in-kind support, targeted event specific sponsorship and donations were also sought.

Agreed Outcomes

1. The sector agrees there is a need for a new national association representing the interests of the broad range of social businesses with membership drawn from co-operatives, mutuals, employee-owned businesses and other businesses operating with a mutual ethos.
2. The sector agrees the shape and structure of the proposed association will be scoped.
3. The sector gives its full support to the program of national IYC 2012 activities outlined in the National IYC 2012 Appeal Supporters Pack.
4. Industry contributions to the National IYC Appeal, guided by a sliding scale levy based on turnover, will be confirmed in the coming months.

Next Steps

1. **August-November 2011** - Scoping study for new national association; Commitments to National IYC 2012 Appeal
2. **November-December 2011** - Reconvene Summit to consider scoped governance and membership structures for new national association and set timetable for Council formation; National Launch of IYC 2012

Key contacts

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Further information (links)

1. National IYC 2012 website www.australia2012.coop
2. National IYC 2012 Appeal Supporters Pack
http://www.socialbusiness.coop/art/rta/downloads/national_iyc_2012_industry_appeal-final.pdf
3. National IYC 2012 Call to Action Pack
<http://www.socialbusiness.coop/resources/NCTA-Briefing-Pack-unlocked.pdf>
4. National IYC 2012 Steering Committee
<http://www.socialbusiness.coop/international-year-of-cooperatives/>
5. 2011 Top 100 List
http://www.socialbusiness.coop/art/rta/downloads/top_100_list_april_2011.pdf

Attachments

- List of Summit attendees
- Patron's Statement of Support

This Communiqué is issued by the IYC 2012 Secretariat - Australia

National Committee Focal Points - Oceania

<http://social.un.org/coopsyear/national-contacts.shtml>

Appendix A

- List of Summit attendees

Abacus Australian Mutuals

Alfalfa House Community Food Cooperative Ltd

Batlow Fruit Co-operative

Breez Finance Pty Ltd

Capricorn Society Ltd

CBH Group

Common Equity Housing Ltd

Community Mutual New England

Community Child Care Co-operative Ltd (NSW)

Co-operatives Australia

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Government Relations Australia Advisory Pty Ltd

IYC 2012 Secretariat - Australia

LOD Co-operative Haulage and Transport

Macleay Regional Co-operative Ltd

Master Butchers Co-operative Ltd

Bankmecu (formerly mecu)

Memberfirst Credit Union

Murray Goulburn Co-operative Ltd

Plumbers Supplies Co-operative

RAC WA

Ravensdown Fertiliser Co-operative Ltd (WA)

Regional Development Australia, MNC Region

Social Business Australia

Southern Quality Produce Co-operative Ltd

The Treasury

The Co-op Bookshop

WAW Credit Union

West Belconnen Health Co-operative

Westfund

Yenda Producers Co-operative Society