

# AHFM Manager's Report to the Annual General Meeting

*Presented by Mathew King, Manager*

## Introduction

The 2024–2025 year has been one of both extreme challenges and positive growth for our market. We experienced significant changes within our management team, while also achieving record results and laying the foundation for future growth.

## Operational Challenges and Leadership Changes

The passing of our manager Kara Jane last year was deeply felt across the organisation. It was a difficult time both emotionally and operationally. Sara stepped in during this period and did an admirable job in leading the market through uncertainty. Following her departure, I have now taken on the role of manager and am pleased to continue building on the work of my predecessors.

## Market Achievements

Despite the challenges, we delivered our most successful markets to date at the end of 2024:

- **Twilight Market** – the largest ever held, with record attendance and participation.
- **Pageant Market** – another standout success, with figures surpassing all previous years.

In nearly every key metric - crowd attendance, membership, engagement, and online reach we saw strong and sustained growth. Stallholder attendance is stable, and we have plans for growth in this space.

## Mini Makers Market

This year also brought a new opportunity. We took on the **Mini Makers Market**, previously managed by the library, under Council sponsorship.

## Promotions and Growth Strategies

While Mount Barker's growth has contributed to our success, our deliberate efforts in promotion and marketing have also played a major role. We have invested time in refining

how we message the market and how we attract people, which is delivering measurable results.

On the operations side, we expanded labour hours, which has increased costs but was seen as necessary to set up the market's long term operational health. A new **rebrand and marketing campaign** is about to be launched, supported by structural changes and streamlined back-end systems designed to reduce administrative burden. These changes have caused some growing pains, but operations are now settling into a stronger rhythm.

## **Community and Council Engagement**

Our relationship with Council continues to strengthen. We have been actively discussing our role in the community and receiving strong support. This gives us confidence that further opportunities for collaboration and backing will emerge in the year ahead.

## **Priorities and Future Direction**

This year our priorities have included:

- managing staffing changes,
- setting up new systems for growth,
- preparing a website & rebrand,
- introducing new market offerings
- Working with the Mount Barker Pageant for the first time
- Successfully taking on the Mini Makers Market.

Looking ahead, our operational focus will be on:

- Attracting high quality stalls in missing categories
- deepening community engagement,
- expanding partnerships and sponsorships, and
- pursuing larger-scale opportunities in collaboration with Council and other stakeholders.

## **Closing and Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to:

- **Our chairman Geoff**, whose long-term commitment has provided stability and vision.
- **Our treasurer Janine**, for her tireless efforts and for shaping the positive culture we are so proud of.
- **Our assistant manager Maddy**, for stepping into the role and excelling with the Mini Makers Market.
- **Our committee** for their support and work behind the scenes
- **Our Volunteers** who we rely on and do a fantastic job
- **Paula and Layla** our two day managers who keep market days running smoothly
- **Orland and Elwin** our hardworking setup team
- And most importantly **Our stallholders and members**, whose loyalty and patronage sustain the market.

We would not be here without your support. Together, we have come through a challenging phase stronger and better positioned for the future. The year ahead promises to be an exciting one, with new initiatives and opportunities on the horizon.

*Signed,*  
Mathew King  
Manager