

CO-OP NEWS

FEBRUARY 2026

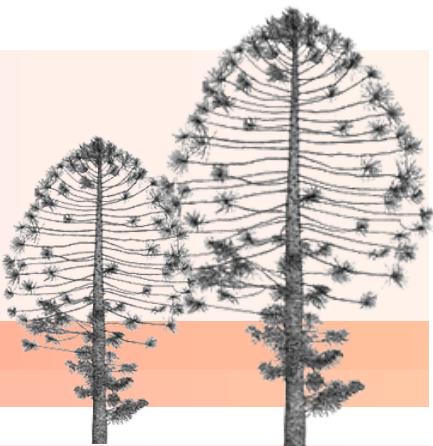
MEET THE CO-OP MEMBER - RITA KERR OF ZONTA



One of the first local community groups I joined when I moved to Maleny in 2021 was Zonta: an international organisation dedicated to expanding women and girls' access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and safe living conditions.

Zonta is a Lakota word originating from the Native-American Sioux peoples, meaning honest and trustworthy. The Zonta Club of the Blackall Range has been running for nearly thirty years. People who join want to give back to their community. It's about locals helping locals and seeing the tangible outcomes of your own fundraising and advocacy efforts.

I became interested in science at an early age, particularly in biology, plants, health, and sustainability.



I became a vegetarian at fifteen, which wasn't so easy back in the seventies! I have always explored alternative foods and so can appreciate how valuable it is to have a place like the Co-op in my community. Having worked in agriculture, I see how the Co-op reflects my own principles of valuing and protecting the planet, particularly in relation to organic foods and progressive permaculture practices.

I love the positive and friendly atmosphere in the Co-op. I can find unusual products, and I don't have to travel a long distance to find them. My favourite products are the natural dishwasher powder, cashew cheese, bulk foods, and produce from local growers, especially the honey. I welcome that products are offered at a fair price to buyers and sellers.

Zonta Club of Blackall Range holds plant stalls in the Maleny Community Centre Kiosk every 2nd Wednesday of the month. One of our big fundraisers has become our annual Trivia Night 'Always Valentine' which is held on Saturday 21st of February from 5.30pm at MCC. We are very grateful for the support we receive from local businesses to make this a successful event in our goal of helping women and girls.

Zonta supplies the Maple Street Co-op with Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) safety cards that provide crucial, discreet contact information for help. There's also a box to collect working mobile phones to distribute to those in need located behind the counter.

We pay our respects to the Jinibara and Kabi Kabi people of this Country, and to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that our Co-op stands on land that was never ceded. We honour the profound wisdom, the deep sustainability and connection to land since time immemorial.

ODE TO THE MIGHTY BUNYA



BUMPER CROP OF BUNYAS / BUNYI / BONYI-BONYI / BA'NJII

Araucaria bidwillii, or the Bunya Pine, is a storied, sacred, and ancient tree that we in Maleny are lucky enough to have growing alongside us.

Even those of us with limited botanical knowledge should be savvy enough to recognise the iconic dome-shaped silhouette of the mighty Bunya, rising tall and proud on a nearby slope. Its straight trunk reaches up into the sky to heights between 30-50m, at the top of which grow the gigantic cones they are perhaps best known for. Each year, the cones begin to fall from the spiky-leaved canopies of these Jurassic giants and thud into the earth with a larger crop every two to four years. Like the leaves, the cones are sharply pointed; difficult to handle barehanded without drawing blood.

Inside are the bunya nuts. If they do not break apart on impact, leaving them in the rain for a day or two should do it. One cone will have between 50-100 nuts, encased in an inner coating from which they require shucking. Alone, the labour is hard-going. The best thing in this case, as in many others, is several pairs of hands. Throw in a bit of gossip and your nuts'll be shucked in no time. Still, one more layer of protection surrounds the edible section of the nut: a hard shell that the nuts can be boiled or roasted in.

Inside is the bunya meat: a firm, starchy, and slightly sweet cross between a potato and a chestnut.

Like the slow-growing tree itself (which can live up to 600 years), harvesting, processing, cooking, and eating bunya nuts is an ode to diligence and the ceremony of labour. Before the European invasion and occupation of Australia, Aboriginal mobs from along the eastern coast marked the fruiting of the Bunyas as a time to gather and settle disputes. The cultural significance of the tree is profound. They should never be harmed or cut down. In 1842, edicts were issued by the colonial government preventing the felling of Bunyas on such grounds, despite these eventually being repealed.

The Bunya offers a living connection to the traditions of the past. This last weekend, down at Ewen Maddock Dam, around eight hundred people gathered again at the bi-annual Bunya Dreaming to celebrate the enormous bumper crop of Bunyas we've seen these past months. Organised by Kabi Kabi Elder, Aunty Bev Hand, the Bunya Dreaming is a special event emphasising Reconciliation, connection to country, and the values of caring, sharing, and community. Activities abounded, including several fun events meant to emulate elements of the bunya harvest: gathering, shucking, and storing the cones. A veritable bounty of bunya recipes was also prepared: bunya gnocchi, bunya bao buns filled with beef brisket, bunya falafels, bunya and condensed milk truffles, and more.

Bunyas evolved as early as 200 million years ago. They were likely eaten and dispersed by dinosaurs. The trees are often referred to as 'living fossils'. Drive around Maleny though and you may see that some of these fossils have truly come to resemble skeletons.

ODE TO THE MIGHTY BUNYA - CONTINUED

About ten years ago scientists raised the alarm on a soil- and water-borne pathogen spreading to bunyas and killing them: *phytophthora* - Greek for 'plant destroyer'. For the third year running, Karen and Spencer Shaw of Maleny's Brush Turkey Enterprises will be hosting a symposium at the Maleny Community Centre discussing issues around the Bunya dieback. Tickets are on sale here: events.humanitix.com/beyond-bunya-dieback-symposium-connecting-people-for-country/tickets

To protect our Bunya trees, you should clean and disinfect your boots or shoes before walking, and always stick to the designated paths. Thankfully, efforts to stop the spread of *phytophthora* have been increasing and more boot cleaning stations have recently been installed in national parks around Queensland. You can try one out at the Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve before you enter.



Article by Matthew Newman



MORE COMMUNITY NEWS: LIVE MUSIC MAKES A COMEBACK TO MALENY

Maleny's much-loved live music venue, Maleny Lane, will reopen on Monday, February 16 after a 12-month hiatus, marking a major win for the town's arts community. Sunshine Coast Council has reaffirmed its support following a lengthy approval and construction process required to address noise and amenity concerns.

The reopening follows approval of a material change of use application, conditional on significant acoustic upgrades. These works included a new sound shell, acoustic roof and upgraded performance area to future-proof the venue. Co-organiser Steve McLeish described the process as a "long haul" but one that will create more opportunities for emerging artists.

The revival was driven by strong community backing, with local professionals donating expertise and organisations including Hinterland Business Centre Inc and Maleny Arts Co-op providing financial support.

Support the next phase by coming along to an upcoming event and purchasing something from the Maleny Arts Co-op bar.

Upcoming events include:

- * Music Relaunch 16th Feb 5:30pm-9pm
- * the return of 'Sing' with Tim Hall and Jem Dunlop 3pm - 5pm Saturday the 21st Feb
- * Renegade Funk - Friday the 27th Feb 6pm - 9pm

Check their blackboard and social media for more.

CO-OP SPOTLIGHT BEERWAH CO-OP



Since early 2025, we've been highlighting a different co-op around Australia. This month, we'd like to highlight our neighbours down the road.

The Beerwah Co-op (formerly Coochin Creek Fruitgrowers Co-operative Limited) was founded in 1936 by a group of local farmers who wanted a community-owned and -operated store that could provide hardware and farming supplies at a fair price, and serve as a distribution hub for sending their produce on to retailers, markets, and canneries in the major cities and towns.

In its 90 years of operation, the Co-op has grown to serve hundreds of local farming co-op members while expanding its retail departments to cater to the broader Glass House Mountains and Hinterland communities. It has also incorporated a fuel station. Together, they serve tens of thousands of customers every month, and are staffed by 50 local employees.

The Co-op currently stocks over 30,000 products, ranging from garden supplies like soil, mulch, plants, seeds, and fertilisers to hardware, timber, water tanks, and irrigation supplies. It is located at the heart of Beerwah town, on Simpson Street. Members get the benefits of much greater buying power as well as discounts.

NOW AND THEN - ALMOST 90 YEARS OF SERVING THE COMMUNITY.



Despite its centrality in the community, the nonagenarian Beerwah Co-op is now under threat of being closed by the Queensland Government's Transport and Main Roads. The Co-op is located on state-owned land next to the Beerwah Train Station. With plans to expand the train station before the 2032 Brisbane Olympics, the government has sought to shutter the longstanding cooperative to build a multi-storey carpark in its stead.

A petition launched two months ago has gathered over 6,600 signatures. Key to the issue is the lack of community consultation and opportunities to provide feedback on the government's proposal. The petition states: 'We do not want to stand in the way of progress. We want to be a part of it!'

Is there no better way to enhance our public transport services without destroying this historic, locally important cooperative?

You can sign the petition here: <https://www.change.org/p/save-beerwah-co-op-simpson-st-servo-heart-of-beerwah-action-group> or visit the Beerwah Co-op and sign their petition in store.

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