



MEDIA RELEASE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CLOSURE – Billabong Garden Complex: Retail Nursery and Shop

The Billabong Garden Complex Retail Nursery and Shop is set to close on Friday 1st November, bringing to an end 22 years of providing high quality plants, nursery products and homewares while supporting local people with a disability through training and employment.

ConnectGV Chief Executive Officer Jacinta Russell said that customers have been very loyal for many years, and shop at the social enterprise purposefully and with intention.

“For over 20 years Billabong Garden Complex has played an important role in our community.”

“Our customers know that through choosing to shop at Billabong they are actively and deliberately supporting the training and employment of people with a disability.”

Board Chair, Scott Kelly, said that while the retail nursery is closing, along with the retail shop, there are several other social enterprise businesses that operate under the management and ownership of ConnectGV, and within the Billabong Garden Complex, that will remain unchanged.

“Customers and community can be assured that all other social enterprise businesses conducted at Billabong Garden Complex will remain operating as normal and will continue the important role of supporting employment for people with disabilities.”

“These include the Wholesale Nursery, Billabong Flowers, Billabong Rags, Billabong Lawns and Gardens and the Container Deposit Scheme, all of which will continue to operate.”

While these elements of Billabong Garden Complex will continue unchanged and will provide employment opportunities for supported staff and NDIS participants, the retail nursery and retail shop have not been financially viable for a period of time.

“With significant changes the NDIS has created, and changes to customer purchasing habits, it is not an option for these components of the business to continue in their current form. We need to be prudent with our decision making and always reviewing the balance of our social and financial objectives.”

The café that was at the site closed in April this year.

Ms. Russell remains optimistic and views these changes as an opportunity for ConnectGV and the greater community.

“Instead of a loss this is recognised as an opportunity to reinvent the offerings available at the Numurkah Rd site, with the Board of Directors and Executive Management team currently considering ways and opportunities to align with activities the supported staff and participants will enjoy, benefit from and value, taking into consideration their needs and choices, and aligning with NDIS and the ConnectGV strategic goals.”

None of the supported employees or NDIS participants will lose jobs or their current programs through this process, however the qualified staff working in the retail nursery and shop have been advised that their roles may be made redundant, and they will be offered opportunities for redeployment across other parts of the organisation where possible.

Ms Russell and Mr Kelly thanked customers and community for their understanding and support.

“We really want to thank the loyal customers and community who have supported the retail nursery and shop over more than 20 years, since it first started in Wanganui Road.”

“ConnectGV looks forward to announcing the next iteration of Billabong Garden Complex and the ways this new offering will continue to provide support to local people who are living with a disability. The Board Directors and Executive team extends grateful thanks to the dedicated staff who have worked hard and with great passion for the cause.”

A closing down sale will start on Thursday 26th September, and will continue throughout the month of October, with the final day of operation planned for Friday 1st November.