

SEASONAL NEWSLETTER



DUNGOG
wholefood co-op
growing together

AUTUMN 2026

A message from your board

Firstly, we'd like to thank you all for your ongoing loyalty and support. You might remember we sent out an email in November last year, appealing to our members to make us part of your regular shop to secure the co-op's sustainability going forward. We followed this up with a member information night in January. We're pleased to say, many of you have stepped up to the plate and **at the time of writing, sales were up 15% on this time last year.** **This really shows what a big difference you can all make with a small increase in your spending with us.** So please keep up the regular visits and volunteer if you can.

We are gearing up for the upcoming AGM, to be held May 14th at 5:30 pm at the Royal Hotel, 80 Dowling Street Dungog. Please find the official notice in a separate email or in the window of the shop. This year's AGM will involve the election of new directors. The DWC board plays a crucial role in ensuring DWC operates according to its principles and goals and that members are kept informed and involved in the co-op's activities. It is the role of directors to; manage finances, including budgeting and financial reporting, ensure compliance with laws and regulations and identify and mitigate potential risks that could impact the co-op's success and long-term viability. Importantly, the board also makes sure that decision-making aligns with the co-op's objectives and the interests of its members. Please come along to have your say.

Of course 2026 has not been smooth so far in broader terms, with escalating conflicts abroad and the knock-on effects of fuel shortages and sharp price rises. None of us are immune to these shocks in such a connected global economy. Times like these make us all even more aware of some of the vulnerabilities we face in our food systems. As a small rural business, we do rely on bringing in a proportion of our products, and freight costs will only rise. **While this all puts stress on households, we are very proud to be part of the solutions, which we believe involve building a more resilient local economy. Specifically, small scale, local agricultural production** means that food is grown and made closer to where it is eaten. This leads to shorter supply chains. Fewer links in the chain can mean less disruption to the flow of inputs and goods from producer to the community.

We will continue to support our local and regional producers as their costs rise and running their businesses becomes more complicated. Mutual support is a powerful thing. We have always believed that a more localised food culture has many benefits, and this is becoming more and more apparent. While the current financial climate will mean food costs will rise across the board, **shopping closer to home will save you money on fuel** and ensure we can build more resilience in our community and keep strengthening our collective capacity to weather changes to our food system. **So here's to a strong 2026 of facing challenges together and building community and a resilient future for people, producers and planet.**

Yours for fair food,

Anna, Graham, James, Judith & Michael

Dungog Wholefood Co-operative

Annual General Meeting

Royal Hotel

May 14th 2026, 5:30 pm

80 Dowling Street
Dungog

Contact the Royal
to book for dinner
0418 443 398

Local Food Spotlight – a sweet summer

The taste of the summer just gone was distinctively local. While we all associate the warmer months with delicious fruit, it often comes from interstate - cherries from Tassie, peaches from the Riverina, mangoes from Queensland.

But this summer, we were proud and excited to be able to offer some incredibly delicious fruit sourced from growers on our doorstep. It was a brilliant season for local figs with **Roz and James Norval of Hunter Valley Avocadoes** supplying a bounty of plump and fragrant fruits for an extended period as well as zingy native finger limes and of course, avocados. Our hard working Supply Coordinator **Judith** was often seen up a ladder at her friend **Nic's** place picking a profusion of fresh mangoes. Thank you Judith and never fear Nic, we will happily help deal with your excess produce any time!

This makes our hearts (and bellies) full. It is a great example of the benefits of local, seasonal food - unsurpassed freshness and quality, connection with our growers and our home, intimate knowledge of how the food we eat is grown, a smaller carbon footprint and close to zero freight costs. Not only was the fruit consistently delicious and affordable, it was wonderful to know that feeding our bodies was also helping sustain the ecosystems that support us. This is what the co-op is all about and we thank our growers for making it possible. Looking after the planet never tasted so good!



World Poetry Day Winners

1st Anne Fisher 'The Paper Bag'

The brown paper bag was found folded.
It'd been kept for a rainy day.
Smelling faintly of anise
A few dried feathery fronds fell onto the bench.
Smoothed out, the paper was pencilled with a shopping list.
Don't forget the fennel!
Back home at the bottom of the shopping bag
It was crumpled.
Torn into narrow strips
The paper found its way to the compost.
For the soil.
With a memory of the forest.

A world
of kindness
In this time
of madness
Eat
your
veggies

3rd Liza Pezzano 'Haiku'

All winners were
'people's choice'.
Thank you to all our
entrants and Anne
Fisher for
organising.

2nd Fran Crane 'Word Salad'

We're a hand of bananas A hive full of honey We're fullsome and fresh And not all about money.	There's less plastic, more paper Cloth bags or a box Our scraps feed a worm farm So the Earth can detox.
We'll welcome you warmly When you visit our shop It's bursting with nurture And the choices don't stop.	We love all our growers Our blue planet too Our farmers and bakers All champs through and through.
We've lush avocados Sweet succulent figs Grown right here in Dungog Proudly local, not BIG.	Our 400 strong family Has a huge beating heart We'll grow stronger for longer If you'll come play your part.
There are so many spices Grains, pulses and nuts Pickles, smoothies, kombucha All kind to your guts.	We're a potful of pasta A rich jar of passata Our health and the planet's Is our Co-op's core charter.

Member Engagement

Of course at the heart of our being co-operative is decision making that involves and is informed by members. We use several channels to connect with our members and create opportunities for feedback and discussion including newsletters like these, our annual survey and face to face events. On January 18th at the Royal Hotel, we ran a member information session where we shared insights into our achievements, successes, challenges and future directions. It was wonderful to see so many members there, engaging in a productive and proactive discussion about our values, our history, our present and what a strong future looks like for the co-op. Thank you to all who came. We will be running these information sessions at least annually and encourage you to come along to stay informed and keep the co-op co-operative!



Another important way we engage with you, our members is through the annual survey. This year we had 91 responses which represents about 25% of our membership. The survey is a great chance to communicate with us about what you love about the co-op, what you're most passionate about and what you feel we could be doing better. Here are some of the results.

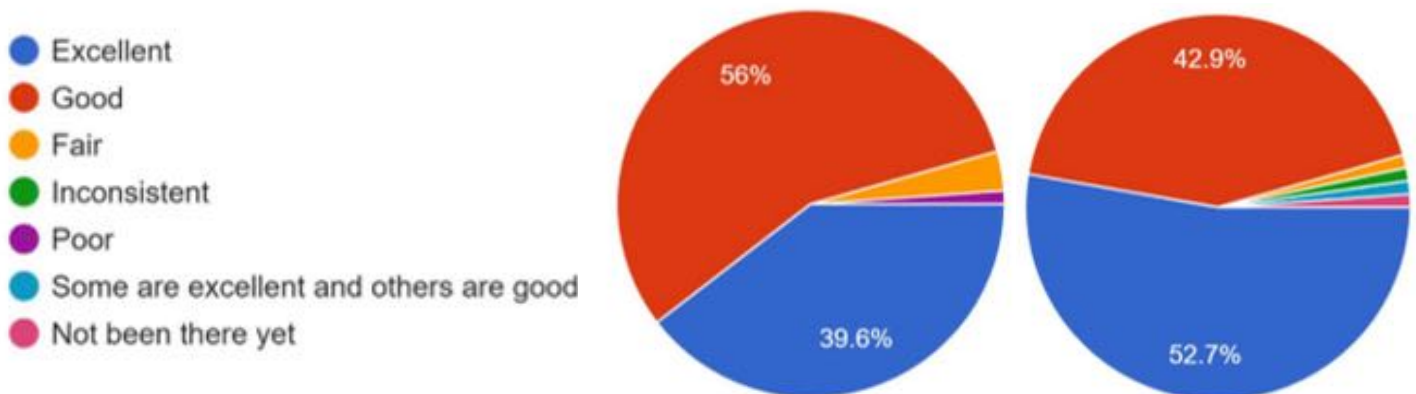
Core Values

It was heartening to see that **local food is still a top priority of our members.** Sustainability, quality and ethics were not far behind.



Product Range and quality

Respondents were overall very happy with the quality (left) and range (right) of products and gave us some great new ideas of products to add to our range.



Communication strategies

Members shared that their top 3 methods of communication are surveys, newsletters and emails and social media.



3 Things members love the most

The co-op is a part of the community. More than a shop, it is a hub with friendly, knowledgeable volunteers and staff who create a welcoming space built on genuine connection and shared values.

The co-op's high-quality, ethical products. Members love the fresh, sustainable options not found elsewhere and members trust us as a values-driven alternative to major supermarkets.

Members were proud of the co-op being community owned, committed to co-operative values & supporting the local community & economy.

Your top survey questions answered

The survey was also an opportunity for members to ask questions and have a voice about what you feel we can keep improving upon. Here were your top questions, answered.

Affordability

Some respondents asked for lower prices especially on staples and more weekly specials.

What we're doing We keep mark ups as low as the business can afford and we have also lowered the volunteer discounts on items with small mark ups like bread, milk and eggs. We plan to promote weekly specials more on social media and we also consistently check our prices against other organic retailers in the area to be as close as possible.

How you can help We need more volunteer help to do price analysis. Let us know if this fits your skill set. Also, larger volume of sales means more profit and would allow more room to move on mark ups.

Transparency & communication

Some respondents asked for more opportunities to find out how the co-op is going and have input into decision making and product choice.

What we're doing Since the survey, we've put out - a member email that shared stats and information, this and one more newsletter and we ran the event above. These will be regular strategies going forward and we welcome your involvement.

How you can help Please come along to events and respond however and whenever you can. We are also looking for a new communication co-ordinator (read on) and more help organising events. Volunteering is a great way to understand how the co-op works from the inside out.

Product selection

Some members wanted to see more local products, less plastic and more reliable stock of staples.

What we're doing We're refining range to cut down on slow selling items to free up cash flow for new products and timely purchase of existing products in the range. We've established soft plastics recycling drop off in store and we are planning to trial pre-packaged bulk staples - in sealed compostable bags. We continue to look for and build relationships with new local suppliers. We'd love any leads and contacts you can share with us by emailing: supply@dungogwholefoodcoop.org.au

How you can help Once again we could move forward more quickly on some of these strategies with more help in the shop to prepare packaged goods, undertake product research and analysis and of course, more sales will free up cash flow for purchasing current and new products for our range.

Ready to eat options

Some members asked about stocking more healthy ready-to-eat and take away meals.

What we're doing The cafe that will be behind the co-op is not part of the co-op business in any way, but Roz and James will be commencing renovations soon. Stay tuned. We've added the wonderful local Ancestral Traditions bliss balls to our ready to go range as well as ready made juices in fridge.

How you can help We'd welcome more help in the shop to possibly develop and prepare a ready-to-eat range in the juice bar. Get in touch if this is your skill area and you have some time.

Co-op Events



Huddle Book Launch with Jade Miles

On September 28th, the co-op was pleased to host a book launch and author talk with Jade Miles - author, podcaster, permaculture farmer and fair food activist. Jade spoke about her journey navigating the complexities, richness, anguish and joy of finding deeper connection to herself, to the planet and to the communities she is part of.

Her book 'Huddle' explores the real and varied ways we can foster togetherness and forge a nourishing future for all on this beautiful planet. Part recipe book, part philosophical reflection, part activist handbook, Huddle is an engaging and deeply thoughtful offering full of beauty, soul and practical advice. Our favourite combination.

A diverse group joined us from close to home in Dungog and further afield from Stroud, Gloucester, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Duns Creek, Seaham & more. It was a pleasure to see familiar faces and meet new friends and collaborators.

We shared conversations, personal insights and stories, and a generous swap table brimming with flowers, fruit, bulbs, plants, books, herbal medicines and delicious home-cooked food.

We thank Jade for giving us her time and opening up about her life, her incredible work and deep insights. Check out her work at Black Barn Farm, her podcast and book 'Futuresteading' and of course grab a copy of 'Huddle'. We'd also like to thank Louise Duff for her impetus and work to make the gathering happen, Liza Pezzano for her wonderful coordination, and our volunteers Anna C., Anna B., Alison, Debra and Michelle for all your help. Finally, we are grateful to Helene Leane and the ever energetic and supportive women of the CWA for hosting our huddle.

Anna Crane



Inaugural Fermentation Competition

The inaugural Fermentation Competition, hosted by the Dungog Wholefood Co-op in partnership with the Dungog Show, proved to be a bubbling success and a memorable first in the Show's long and proud history.

Across the competition, the humble magic of cultured foods took centre stage, with entries celebrating the creativity, care and curiosity that fermentation inspires. From tangy sourdough loaves and beautifully risen fermented grains, to fizzy kombucha, spicy kimchi, vibrant chutneys and punchy hot sauces, the standard of entries was impressive across all four categories.

Organiser Jimmy Kingston said the competition was designed to honour “living foods that have nourished communities around the world for thousands of years,”

while encouraging people to have a go, regardless of experience level. That spirit was clearly reflected in the mix of entrants, which ranged from first-time fermenters to seasoned kitchen experimenters.

The judges were **Simon Brownbridge of Fosterton Biodynamic Farm & Bakery, Jane Jenkinson of Wholefood Family and our own Tara King.** They assessed entries on creativity, flavour, presentation and technique. We thank them sincerely for their time and generosity in sharing their expertise and enthusiasm.

Category winners were: **Dan Lyons** 1st Grains Bread and overall for his sourdough focaccia, very closely followed by **Meg Garnham** in 2nd overall for her cheong sour mandarin syrup and **Grace Bourke** scored a highly commended overall for her oxymel. Other champions were Other Grains: 1st **Margarita McGhee**, Kombucha: 1st **Jacqui Purcell**, Other drinks: 1st **Meg Garnham**, Kimchi: 1st **Jimmy Kingston**, Kraut: 1st **Jacqui Purcell**, Other Vegetables: Tied 1st **Casey Anderson & Margarita McGhee and Fruit: 1st Meg Garnham.**

Throughout the Dungog Show weekend, the fermentation display drew strong interest from visitors, sparking plenty of conversation, recipe swapping and curiosity about how everyday ingredients can be transformed through time and technique. The event created a shared space for learning and connection around food that is healthy, sustainable and deeply rooted in tradition. It also highlighted how fermentation aligns with the Co-op's broader mission of promoting nourishing, locally made and thoughtfully produced food.

With enthusiastic feedback from entrants and the public alike, the **Fermentation Competition** has well and truly proved its place on the Show schedule, and may just have inspired a few new fermentation projects to start bubbling away at home. We thank **Jeannie Briggs-Sears and the Show Committee** for their generosity & hard work.

Shannon Benton

No-Waste Craft with Michelle

Wasn't it a hot day for the Dungog Christmas Street Party?! Despite the heat, Michelle and her crew of volunteers shared how to make decorative and festive stars. Children in particular, joyfully expressed themselves with flowers, twigs, branches, foliage and ribbon. Watching them proudly carry their creations out was a treat. It was so popular, Michelle added another day, outside on the co-op deck. With more space and plenty of passing Saturday traffic, it turned out to be a fun and busy morning. Local bush star makers were able to take their time making individual works of art, for themselves or for gifts. One was heard to say, "my wife is not going to believe I made this!"

Following this success came the Valentines Day craft workshops where participants transformed recycled coloured paper into garlands of hearts.

These events were extremely well received and created affordable, inclusive and playful opportunities to celebrate together while sharing ways to avoid plastic and other waste.

Thank you Michelle and all the vollies for making these wonderful events such a success. Stay tuned via our socials and in the shop for future workshops.

Anna Beaumont



Ko-op Karaoke Rocks the Royal!

Once again in 2025, Ko-op Karaoke was a chart topping hit! On the evening of a sweltering day, a small but very rowdy band of exhibitionists gathered to strut their stuff, belt out some tunes and raise some funds for the co-op. Among the crowd were hard-core karaoke veterans and enthusiastic first timers alike. While the quality of singing was not guaranteed, the frivolity and laughs were in generous supply. **New to the line up this year was a dedicated kids hour** and safe to say it was the smallest contestants who made the biggest noise and quite frankly, stole the show.

Prize winners were: best dressed *Jimmy Kingston* aka 1986 David Bowie from the *Labyrinth* and an honourable mention to *Casey Anderson* as Madonna. Best performer went to *Evelyn Christie* for 'Levitating' with a highly commended awarded to *The Co-op Pipsqueaks (aka all the kids)* with 'Coming Home'.

Stay tuned for the 2026 dates and don't miss a ridiculously fun night. **And a loud shout out to the team at the Royal Hotel once again for hosting us.**



Co-op calendar celebrates the seasons

Our Dungog Wholefood Co-op 2026 Calendar sold like hotcakes! How many copies did you buy? I tucked them into Christmas stockings and gave them away as gifts - in a Boomerang bag, of course.

Thank you to the thirteen local artists who donated their artwork, in order of appearance - Anne Fisher, Anna Crane, Greg Danvers, Alexandra Wade, Jeanne Harrison, Sue Hodgins, Jane Richens, Fran Crane, Sarah Crawford, Ella Delarue, Liz Hughes, Helene Leane and Michelle Dado-Millynn. The Co-op is so fortunate to have so much talent and so many generous people.

The images for every month reflected and celebrated fresh produce, with bright colours and clever imagery. January tomatoes through to bright berries for December, with apple, beetroot, broccoli and lemons along the way. The March pumpkins inspired big pots of nutritious soups, made with locally grown produce. September sweetcorn reassured us that spring was on the way.

The Calendar is a celebration of our love of fair food and the special community we have created in Dungog. Each month's artwork reminds us that eating seasonally is practical and more affordable - making the most of what is fresh and abundant.

The artworks in this calendar allow us to savour the colours, forms, and shapes of the fruit and vegetables we grow, eat and love so much. Thank you for supporting the co-op and relishing the food that connects us and brings us closer to the land.

Anna Beaumont



Photos: Anne Fisher
Design Template: Sacha Anderson
Writing: Anna Beaumont, Anna Crane &
Shannon Benton
Layout: Anna Crane

MEMBER

THE CO-OP FEDERATION

ddcc

Dungog District Chamber of Commerce
'Taking care of Business'



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