

Food policy a first for the region

INDIGO

INTERVIEW

Coral Cooksley

talks with

*Peter Kenyon,
Beechworth*



PETER Kenyon was born in Manly.

Deciding to make the tree-change in 2013, he and partner Jamie Kronborg made what was intended to be the first of many reconnaissance trips to explore prospective towns. On their first trip they arrived in Beechworth, fell in love with the first home they saw, made an offer and arrived back in Sydney two days later with a new life in North East Victoria to plan for. When it feels right, don't overthink it!

What's your job?

I am currently self-employed, working on regional food policy development. Prior to the last federal election, I enjoyed the privilege of working for Cathy McGowan MP.

What brought you to this role?

I've always wanted to understand the issues of food and eating. Eating is the most fundamental of our daily actions, delivering enormous planetary impact. My career has always had a lot to do with food. Prior to moving to Victoria I owned and ran an award-winning, certified organic grocery store enjoying a national reputation. It honoured Granny Smith, probably Australia's most famous farmer. After moving here, I

completed a masters degree in food policy which helps to shape my thinking.

What do you love about your job?

I see food policy as offering great opportunities for our region. North East Victoria is well advanced in food policy thinking, largely driven by a progressive community and public health advocates like Anna Mackinlay at Beechworth Health Service. Policy should deliver positive social and economic value. A good example is Vermont's Farm to Plate program. It's world-respected for bringing rural development, diversified agriculture, increased employment and supporting the development of manufacturing and processing businesses. On Friday, March 27 I'm excited

that the program's director Jake Claro will be speaking in Wangaratta. All welcome.

What do you do in the community?

I'm secretary-treasurer of Indigo Valley Speakers, our local Toastmasters public speaking group. I'm also a member of the Indigo Shire Environment Advisory Committee. Indigo is developing the region's first food policy which we hope will be picked up and "mirrored" by other regional local governments.

What's the most impor-

tant current community issue for you?

Getting our shire's food policy implemented and advocating this to other North East local governments. Our current global food system is responsible for 37 per cent of global greenhouse gases, driving climate change. After our recent summer of bushfires, we all know there is no more "business as usual".

What would you do to solve, change or improve that situation?

I would create a Ministry of Environment, Food

and Rural Affairs as exists in the United Kingdom to bring focus to these related issues. I'd create incentives for regenerative agricultural practices that capture carbon in the soil, deliver healthy food and provide employment, particularly for young, rural Australians. Food policy responds to these issues.

What's the most important current world issue for you?

Global warming.

If the person you'd most like to meet came to Indi, or was already here, who would that be and what would you show them?

Prince Charles. I would show him our magnificent natural and farmed land-

scape.

Why would you show him that?

Prince Charles gets food policy, thoughtful farming practices and respect for landscape and country. He would love it here.

What book are you reading?

Peter Andrews' Beyond the Brink.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Beechworth's Peter Kenyon sees food policy offering great opportunities for the region.