

**70**  
Years

## Surprise discovery of this 1947 certificate unearths MBL's oldest Member



The surprise discovery of this MBL membership certificate issued 70 years ago has confirmed a Whyalla butchery as our oldest continuing Member.

Issued on September 1, 1947, the long-lost certificate was discovered in mint condition and has been framed for display at fourth-generation Azzopardi Butchers.

Third-generation Brian "Chops" Azzopardi, 70 and semi-retired, chanced upon the certificate concealed in a mass of old paperwork.

"I never knew about it, so finding it was a complete surprise. I found it when I was cleaning out files covering the years from 1950 to 2000," Chops says.

"I was surprised it was in such very good condition for 70 years old, so we had it framed to preserve and display in the shop.

"We've always had a strong relationship with MBL; I've worked here all my life and we have purchased from MBL for as long as I can remember, but I didn't know we joined MBL way back in 1947, which was the year of my birth."

Until Chops's chance discovery, Conroy's Smallgoods was believed to be MBL's oldest continuing Member, joining on April 15, 1957.

Now, after a thorough search of MBL archives, CEO Warren McLean

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## MBL thanks volunteer saviours of Keith plant

MBL has organised donations totalling \$13,000 to Keith CFS as a mark of our gratitude for the volunteer brigade's magnificent work in saving our Keith rendering plant from a fierce bushfire.

The plant miraculously survived the Sherwood bushfire on January 6 this year, thanks to the heroics of a number of MBL staff and the Keith CFS.

Keith CFS's two-truck, eight-man brigade led the firefighting, being ordered by the CFS to "stay and defend" the MBL plant in frightening conditions.

The fire burnt all around the plant and, to some extent, over it. It could easily have been destroyed but it survived untouched. We dodged a massive bullet.

Also saved were the jobs of the 32 locals who work at the plant.

The Keith plant is very important to MBL, processing a number of single species for pet food, mainly for Canada and the US.

MBL's losses from the fire were

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Presented with thanks... Warren McLean and Keith CFS captain Jason Wayman with the Certificate of Appreciation which accompanied MBL's financial donation. Photo: Border Chronicle.

about \$350,000, all of which was covered by insurance.

We lost extensive fencing, trees and some equipment including a vintage truck and irrigation infrastructure.

CEO Warren McLean wasted no time in announcing MBL would donate \$10,000 directly to Keith CFS, made up of \$5,000 in the 2017-18 financial year and another \$5,000 in 2018-19.

We asked our insurance providers to chip in, too.

In June, Keith CFS received \$8,000 made up of MBL's initial \$5,000 along with \$1,000 each from Tony Atkinson's Insurance Services Pty Ltd, Insurance Advisernet, and Allianz Australia.

Warren also presented Keith CFS captain Jason Wayman with a framed Certificate of Appreciation "in recognition of your

significant contribution which saved the MBL Keith Proteins site from substantial damage."

"For more than eight hours, CFS units were in the area, with the Keith brigade staying to defend our plant. They did a magnificent job," Warren says.

MBL's second \$5,000 donation will be made early in the new financial year.

Jason Wayman told the local *Border Chronicle* that the Keith brigade was delighted with the donations, which were totally unexpected.

"We do this for the community like many of the other volunteer groups in the Tatiara district. We really don't expect special recognition," he says.

"We just do our job and we don't really think about how much it can benefit people, but as Warren said, we've saved so

many jobs and families from hardship.

"We will be putting the money from MBL towards new amenities and equipment to keep the Keith CFS up to scratch.

"We will also put some of the money from MBL towards training up younger members of the community who are CFS cadets.

"We already have such a broad range of ages as volunteers of our brigade. We've got members who are in their 70s and we have 16-year-olds.

"We run cadets here, train them up and then they take a step up at the brigade to keep this service running."

Keith CFS will use MBL's video surveillance footage from the fire to demonstrate to the cadets a real-life example of a fire drill.

## AMIC's new faces in SA - pages 10-11



# Tuna town's hooked on Craig

Craig McCathie displays a bluefin tuna. Fed on pilchards, wild tuna like this double weight in three months in pens off Port Lincoln.

Craig McCathie only wanted to promote his glorious seafood; now he finds himself promoting the whole of Port Lincoln.

He began guided factory tours of The Fresh Fish Place to showcase best-practice processing of local seafood, before adding brilliant fish & chips and other seafood to eat-in or take away.

Locals were quickly hooked and the business blossomed. Now, locals routinely bring in visiting relatives and friends for a seafood education.

The Fresh Fish Place has been swept along with the locals' enthusiasm, becoming one of Port Lincoln's major tourist attractions, with factory tour bookings handled by the town's official tourist office.

About 40,000 people visit Craig's factory and fish cafe every year, representing a 50/50 mix of locals and visitors.

"Port Lincoln as a whole loves us," says Craig, 57, a former fisherman who has become one of MBL's largest seafood Members.

"Locals are proud of Port Lincoln being home to one of the southern hemisphere's biggest fishing fleets and they like to show it off.

"At first, I was pleasantly surprised when locals began saying they bring visitors here to learn about local seafood and sample it;

## 'Port Lincoln as a whole loves us... locals are proud of their town; they are proud of us'

now it's a common thing.

"They take visitors for a drive around the marina to see the fishing boats and they bring them here for fresh seafood and maybe a tour.

"They are proud of their town; they are proud of us. It's great for us, making all our efforts seem more worthwhile. We love it."

Apart from cooked seafood, the retail side has a dazzling array of fresh local seafood and varied accompaniments, including local and imported salt, crumbs and lemon juice, plus specialty giftware.

The facility also incorporates the Port

Lincoln Seafood Cooking School where chefs conduct themed classes for locals and visitors.

Creating the complete seafood experience has been more than 30 years in the making for Craig, who was a professional fisherman for 20 years before entering fish processing.

And now that he is satisfied with the retail offering, he is devoting more time to boosting the wholeside side.

He says retail, wholesale and other food service (mainly frozen seafood to interstate restaurants) each represent one-third of total turnover.

"In the last six months, I've re-directed my focus back to wholesale," he says.

"Now that retail is up and the menu has evolved and is reasonably complete, I'm working more on wholesale where there are larger volumes of sales."

Craig has already grown The Fresh Fish Place into Eyre Peninsula's biggest seafood supplier, servicing more than 100 businesses as well as leading restaurants in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.



Craig's fish and chips are second-to-none.

Continued page 4

# Tuna town's hooked on Craig

From page 3

About 200 tonnes of seafood is handled annually. There are 27 employees.

"Sales are steady but I'd like to see a small amount of growth," says Craig, who runs the business with wife Sandy Harder.

"I've been doing extra work on weekends, resulting in obtaining export accreditation last December. We were pleased to send our first shipment of seafood to Asia in February."

Craig declined to elaborate about exports but sees rewards with careful planning and hard work.

A Kiwi who grew up in Wellington, he travelled Australia with a friend at age 21. They made a beeline to surfing mecca Cactus Beach, west of Ceduna.

They ran short of money and heard there was work at the tuna factory in Port Lincoln - a town Craig says they'd never heard of.

Craig took a job at Port Lincoln Tuna Processors and became interested in the broader seafood industry, seeing career options.

He made Port Lincoln his home and spent 10 years, from 1982, poling for tuna. It was demanding and dangerous work at sea in the heady years before tuna farming.

Work followed out of Port Lincoln in the prawn, shark and leather jacket fisheries.

Craig worked interstate in Tasmania's deep-sea orange roughy fishery, and in WA's scallop fishery from Shark Bay.

Back in Port Lincoln, he obtained sand crab and blue crab licences and operated two boats before entering the seafood processing business in 2000.



A 50/50 mix of Port Lincoln locals and tourists make up 40,000 annual visitors.



Guided tours take in assorted production areas. Here, a crew shells prawns.

"There was strong growth for four years but then we had some tough years. It was hard to keep the business afloat," Craig says.

"The number of seafood processors on Eyre Peninsula has halved since we started..."

Nevertheless, Craig sees a bright future, based on the region's reputation for having some of the world's best seafood.

He says thanks to good management practices to ensure sustainability, our caught seafood has increased in value as the

broad image of the industry has improved.

"We developed the science to calculate biomass areas. Good management was needed for some fisheries which were approaching over-fishing," he says.

"There have been years and years of pain when the overall industry plateaued and went down a little, but it should be all right now that we're totally well managed.

"We try to get this sustainability message across on our factory tours, >



Weighing prawns for packaging.



The shop carries a diverse gift range, from local and imported salt to giftware.

➤ to educate consumers on how well fisheries are managed.

“Fishermen are now the heroes, rather than the cowboys, of the sea, moving from open-season fishing to being the custodians of our fisheries.”

As well as educating consumers, Craig says the factory tours are simply good for business, “bringing people in the door.”

“The tours can kick off a slow day. On a quiet Monday, for example, we might get a group of 18 for a tour and they’ll spend money in the shop later,” he says.

“The majority of those on tour stay for lunch, making their visit a complete ocean to plate experience.

“We get a lot of grey nomads, so we’ve created frozen fish packs for two. Nomads tend to buy as many as they can fit in their

caravan and motorhome freezers.”

Craig says word of mouth “works amazingly well” for his business.

“You have to achieve excellence to get people talking about you and then you have to maintain it,” he says.

“If you let the quality of your product and service slip, it can change your business.

“You must constantly innovate to stay on top of the game and to keep your reputation.”

Craig says planning is underway to expand the shop’s retail area and build a front deck for extra dining.

“We’ve also applied for a liquor licence. We now have four local wineries and a brewery, so we’re looking at matching their products with our seafood,” he says.



Taking delivery of an Atlantic salmon.

## Next edition: We take an educational tour of the seafood factory

Advertising’s unpredictable impact hit home to Craig McCathie recently as he was surfing off a remote beach south of Port Lincoln.

He was waiting for a wave, enjoying the isolation, when another surfer startled him by paddling from nowhere to yell, “That’s great advertising in Adelaide, Craig!”

The intruder was referring to a photo, plastered over a tram, of one of Craig’s staff, Lana Harvey, holding a Spencer Gulf hiramasa kingfish as part of an I Choose SA promotion by Brand South Australia.

The same photo was in MBL News in December for a story on Lana’s role as Wholesale Logistics Manager at The Fresh Fish Place, where she selects premium seafood for distribution across Australia.

Lana says she’s been getting constant feedback for months about her photo on the tram.

“People comment on it all the time. I get lots of texts, at least one a week or so. It’s really amazing how many people from around Port Lincoln have seen it,” she says.

While Lana’s photo is used well, another photo at the front of the tram is given more space and is therefore more

# Lana’s amazing tram ride



eye-catching, but people keep recognising Lana.

However, securing a photo of

“Lana’s tram” proved elusive for MBL News, with several city contacts keeping an eye out for it without success.



The photo that started it all... Lana with a hiramasa kingfish.

But our luck changed after six weeks when it was spotted by Brand South Australia journalist Melissa Keogh, who snared a few photos as the elusive tram sped off down King William St.

Now Lana has photographic proof of what all the fuss is about.

Lana, 27, first worked at The Fresh Fish Place for the previous owner as a teenager and says she has taken pride in the development of the business.

“There was only the boss, his son and me when I started; now 27 of us here,” she says.

\*Google “Lana Harvey seafood” for her I Choose SA video on the Port Lincoln seafood industry.



Brian "Chops" Azzopardi with the framed MBL membership certificate which takes pride of place in the Whyalla shop.

# MBL'S OLDEST MEMBER

From page 1

says this distinction appears to belong to the Azzopardi family.

The search produced the original application for membership, dated August 5, 1947, along with all transfer of share documents from over the years.

The business has changed hands five times within the Azzopardi family, from generation to generation, since 1947. Membership of MBL has continued without a single day's break.

MBL's archival search was complicated because when new owners applied for membership, they used their own names rather than the business name.

"Every time a family member came in to MBL or went out, a new membership with a new commencement date was created," Warren says.

"Over the years, this served to cloud the Azzopardi 'story' as MBL Members. It's nice, for history's sake, that we can recognise our oldest Member."

The membership number, from 1947, of Salvatore Azzopardi and his son Ronald was 594. The number for current owners, cousins Neil and Mark Azzopardi, who joined in 1990, is 4939, reflecting the Co-op's growth.

The 1947 membership certificate, signed by Secretary Horace Bontoft and Chairman



Semi-retired Brian shows his skill.

George Topsfield, reflected the purchase of one ordinary share for two pounds.

Issued when MBL was at 150 Weymouth St, city, the certificate quaintly described the Co-op as "an association for the promotion of the welfare of the butchering industry."

From the start, the Azzopardi business was called Whyalla Meat Service, which is still its registered name, but it now trades as Azzopardi Butchers.

Chops takes pride in his family's history and the significant role the butchers have played in the growth of Whyalla, which was once SA's biggest regional city.

However, his knowledge falls short when it comes to why he bears the nickname Chops.

"I've always been Chops. I'm not sure how it started, but maybe I was called it in the school yard because I'm from a butchering family," he says.

Chops has lived and worked in the same street for all his 70 years.

"I haven't gone far - I was born in the hospital up this street, I've lived in

➤ this street all my life and I've worked in the same street all my life," he says.

"Whyalla was originally about the shipyards, before the steelworks, and my father came here from Iron Knob to cater for the building of the first blast furnace.

"He'd buy livestock from the Mid North and slaughter them here.

"Then BHP built the first abattoir in Whyalla and we did the slaughtering there. It was closed in the 1970s for steelworks expansion.

"We had four shops but the coming of Woolworths in the late 1960s hit us. We ended up with just the one shop which we still run today."

The Azzopardis responded to the advent of supermarkets by making a concerted move into wholesale, supplying the substantial Whyalla Hospital for 40 years.

Chops says he cooked for the Queen during her 1986 visit to Whyalla - and she was apparently impressed.

A letter of thanks to Chops is displayed in the shop from the then owners of the local motel where the Queen dined.

The letter states, "Words cannot express our gratitude for your assistance in our preparation for Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

"The comments have flowed continuously from the Mayor, the Queen's personal Press Secretary and many Royal Aides, all saying what a marvellous effort Whyalla gave.

"Your efforts are very much appreciated."

Chops has seen enormous changes to retail butchering. "There was saw dust on the



Fourth generation butcher Neil Azzopardi... proud of his shop's history.

floor, and the only time we'd have chicken was at Christmas and Easter," he says.

"We'd get chickens from local Eyre Peninsula farms and bring them back here to be slaughtered in the shop."

Smallgoods such as kransky, mettwurst, pepperoni and ham streak are still made in the shop, but fritz comes from Conroy's "because it's the best."

Current custodians, cousins Mark, 62, and Neil, 49, say business is "pretty good" as Whyalla's confidence rises after the "saving" of the steelworks by British billionaire Sanjeev Gupta.

Neil says, "Without him, we may well have

closed the shop.

"Sales were down. We were selling more mince and sausages than T-bones. We went down from three bodies (of beef) a week to one and a half.

"We had to get rid of two staff, but things are picking up and there's more confidence in the town over the steelworks.

"The ship has steadied and we're trading steadily.

"Years ago when the shipyards closed, we went from a population of 36,000 to 23,000. It was a real kick in the guts but we survived, and it's happening again.

Continued page 9



Continuing the oldest running business in Whyalla... third generation butcher Brian Azzopardi with his son Neil.



# A CAPTAIN'S KNOCK!

## Gary retires after 50 years at the one shop

Gary Cimarosti admits old habits die hard as he adjusts to retirement after working at the same shop in Daw Park since 1968.

"I have mixed feelings. I've been working there since I was 14 and to suddenly stop after 50 years is taking some getting used to," says Gary, who retired on June 30.

"I've enjoyed being a butcher but it's time to retire. I've had a toe cut off due to sugar diabetes, and my back and shoulder are gone.

"In Julie, I've had a very understanding wife. I've worked long hours and I've missed out on a lot of things.

"She has been very good to me, and the business has been very good to us.

"We're going to do some travelling, starting in August with a European river cruise from Budapest to Amsterdam before visiting relatives in northern Italy."

With Gary hanging up the knives

at 64, his brothers Steve (57) and Phillip (54) are now considering their options, continuing to run Cimarosti Brothers' Colonel Light Meat and Smallgoods "for the time being."

In our February issue, *MBL News* had a story on the three brothers chalking up a combined 108 years at the Daw Park shop.

Butchering is in their blood. Their father Louie ran his own shop in Gilbert St, Adelaide, for

48 years until his death, aged 63.

All four men always strongly supported MBL, with Gary recalling riding his bike to pick up supplies for his father when the Co-op was in Waymouth St.

Gary left school in 1968, taking an apprenticeship at the Daw Park shop which he later bought from Bob Barstow.

He recalls, "You'd get stirred up as an apprentice; the butchers

played all sorts of tricks!

"They once told me I had to deliver soup bones to my Dad. They put the bones in a smelly old hessian bag; people on the bus moved away from me.

"I walked into the pub and gave the bones to Dad, who of course knew nothing about it."

Gary says much has changed over the past 50 years, not only in the meat industry but to the local Daw Park >



The Cimarosti brothers (from left) Phillip, Gary and Steve.

➤ area's demographic.

"It has been a good area for the business over the years. I once saw it as a lower class area with 1,000 Army houses but there now are some million dollar houses," he says.

"You grow attached to your regular customers; you get to know them and see their families grow over generations.

"I remember giving fritz to little girls and they later brought in their children."

Gary became an accomplished smallgoods maker, winning many AMIC awards. He went out a winner in his final competition last year, winning gold for his fritz.

"I'm all for AMIC's push to have fritz recognised (as an iconic South Australian food) but it might be hard to achieve because so much now comes from big companies interstate," he says.

"I was making 600kg of fritz a week until I retired, supplying 20

other butchers.

"I was taught (how to make fritz and other smallgoods) by Tommy Cobb who did some work for us after he retired from Conroy's."

Gary's retirement was marked with drinks for staff and some customers in a low-key function at the rear of the shop after closing one Saturday.

Among those presenting gifts was a woman who has been a loyal customer for 40 years.

"Janice has always come here; she made Gary some matchsticks - jam and cream pastries," Phillip says.

"I've been working here with Gary for 40 years... it's a long time. He can't be replaced."

Steve says, "Gary had only been gone for a few days when I missed him.

"I might be biased as his brother, but he was an excellent butcher and the best smallgoods maker going."



Shaved for Lucy... the Azzopardi Butchers crew of (from left) Neil Azzopardi, apprentice Chris Wheeler, server Rachel Hobbs and Mark Azzopardi with the Stainer family of Rick, little Lucy and Angela. Photo: Whyalla News.

## MBL'S OLDEST MEMBER

From page 7

"We have always prided ourselves on quality. We have a good rapport with people and we give a little bit extra compared to the supermarkets."

While Neil has always appreciated the "steel" of locals, he says he was little surprised at their generosity in the shop's World's Greatest Shave promotion in May to raise money for the Leukemia Foundation.

Customers dug deep to sponsor butchers and staff shaving their hair in a staged event outside the shop, raising \$6,070 for the charity.

"I've never been involved in anything like

this before and the strong support opened my eyes to how generous Whyalla people are," Neil says.

"We were absolutely blown away by the generosity of people. We are proud to have raised this amount of money."

Neil ended up almost bald after losing his locks, butcher Rick Stainer had his thick beard removed, apprentice Chris Wheeler had facial hair shaved and server Rachel Hobbs had her hair dyed pink.

But the "unkindest cut of all" was saved for Mark, who has his trademark moustache removed. "I've had it for 43 years since I was 19, but it had to go for such a good cause," he says.

The shop was moved to raise money for the Leukemia Foundation in response to Rick's daughter, Lucy, 4, battling acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

The foundation has been supporting the Stainer family during Lucy's treatment in Adelaide, with mum Angela staying with Lucy in the city.

Mark says, "Ricky was keeping us informed with Lucy's progress and what the Leukemia Foundation has done to help the family with accommodation and support.

"So we decided to try to raise some money for the foundation to help the families that have to go through this terrible disease.

"Lucy is an incredible young girl, she always has this amazing smile despite what she has to go through. But with an attitude like hers, she will beat this disease."



**ANTHONY MCGREGOR**

Despite no longer having an Adelaide office, AMIC says support and service delivery for SA's independent retail butchers is continuing unabated through Melbourne duo Oliver Stankovski and Anthony McGregor.

Under the new structure following the retirement of Paul Sandcock, the pair has begun regular trips to SA to visit butchers and conduct AMIC competitions, including Sausage King.

Other AMIC staff in Sydney and Melbourne use phone and email to address members' concerns over WHS, Human Resources and other wider industry issues.

Oliver is chiefly responsible for AMIC's SA operations in his role as Regional Retail Manager for Victoria, SA and Tasmania.

He has already accumulated frequent flyer points, chiefly running AMIC's assorted SA promotions such as Sausage King, the smallgoods awards and apprentices' competition.

The regional heats and State finals concluded in late June, with the winners to be announced at the annual Awards for Excellence dinner on August 25.

# AMIC'S NEW FACES

"The competitions gave Anthony and I good opportunities to meet a lot of people," says Oliver, who was first introduced to members at Paul's final AMIC Forum in March.

Oliver oversees Anthony, a new AMIC recruit who will make more visits as the "go-to" man visiting SA butcher shops.

Anthony, 46, a former Fitzroy AFL player, is calling on his experience as an independent retail butcher as he settles into his role.

He has obvious passion for the industry, after owning two shops in suburban Melbourne and representing Australia against New Zealand in the

2012 Trans Tasman Butchers' Challenge.

This winning Australian team included Trevor Hill, Chairman of AMIC's SA Retail Council.

Anthony says, "I'm the first port of call for SA members. My initial role has been to get into shops, introduce >



**OLIVER STANKOVSKI**

> myself and see if there are any issues.

"If, for example, a butcher has questions about penalty rates, I'll help and if extra help is needed, especially if a dispute is involved, I'll pass it onto the AMIC HR team in Sydney.

"We don't want members to think they are alone. We'll be over to SA often, and we're only a phone call away."

Anthony says he was "born and bred" into the meat game, having uncles and cousins as butchers. He began an apprenticeship at the same time as his Aussie Rules career blossomed.

He played for Collingwood in the VFL. He was drafted to Fitzroy and for the next five years he worked part-time while committing to a strict training regime.

A utility, he played 41 AFL games and kicked 11 goals in 1993-96 before severe hamstring injuries forced retirement just as Fitzroy was transforming into the Brisbane Lions.

His butchery apprenticeship was at a shop in suburban Melbourne, at Reservoir. He later bought this shop before buying another at Vermont South which he sold last year.

"I was having a break when the AMIC position came up and I was lucky enough to get it, allowing me to stay in the meat game," he says.

AMIC's new structure stems from a "national strategic decision" announced last November to streamline the management of membership services across the various States, signalling changes to AMIC offices.

At around this time, Paul Sandercoc announced his plans for retirement after 23 years as AMIC's Executive Director in SA.

AMIC vacated its Adelaide office on Greenhill Rd on December 1, with Paul operating from a home office until he retired in April.

The roles previously handled by Paul have been split up.

# Drakes to shift to self-supply with \$80 million centre



An artist's impression of Drakes's new grocery distribution centre. Preliminary site works have begun.

Drakes Supermarkets, an important customer of MBL, aims to be operating its new \$80 million grocery distribution centre in northern Adelaide by next June.

Drakes will shift to self-supply when its current agreement with wholesaler Metcash ends next June.

The state of the art centre will be a "key plank" of Drakes's "vertical integration strategy."

It will incorporate \$12 million worth of robotics in a high-tech warehouse picking system for up to 23,000 separate lines of products, including grocery, dairy and frozen foods.

The centre will cover 104,000 square metres on a 17 hectare site on Stebonheath Road, Edinburgh North.

About 300 jobs are expected to be created during construction, with a further 120 to 250 ongoing fulltime equivalent jobs created when the centre opens.

Drakes will continue to operate its meat centre at Beverley and its fruit and vegetable centre at Pooraka.

"The new centre is a major investment in the sustainable future of Drakes Supermarkets," says General Manager Bob Soang.

"It's also a long term investment and vote of confidence in our loyal customers and suppliers."

With origins dating to 1974 when Roger Drake purchased his first supermarket, Drakes now has 57 supermarkets across SA and Queensland, an annual turnover in excess of \$1

billion and a total of 5,500 staff nationally.

It spends about \$20 million each year upgrading and refurbishing its stores.

Drakes has grown into an important customer for MBL over the years, says Operations Manager Bexley Carman.

"Drakes is a big contributor; it is an important part of our business and vice-versa," Bexley says.

"MBL supplies Drakes with a range of packaging for the meat, bakery and deli sections.

"Our blending unit supplies Drakes with products including crumbs and marinades, and we collect raw material from the Drakes meat centre for recycling at Wingfield."

**'Drakes is an important part of our business and vice-versa' - MBL's Bexley Carman**

A young Ashley Stroyan just wanted some pocket money when he began working for the local butcher as a clean-up boy after school.

Some 24 years later, he's still working at that same Port Augusta shop after doing his apprenticeship there and then buying the business.

His shop, Terry Gardiner's Meats & Smallgoods, enjoys a strong reputation that extends to customers beyond Port Augusta to Stirling North, Wilmington, Quorn, Hawker and further north to Roxby Downs.

"We had the chance to buy the shop in 2004 and we're glad we did," says Ashley, pictured.

He runs the business with wife Belynda, who does all the bookwork and helps serve. They are supported at various times by five others, a mix of part and full time staff - plus a clean-up boy.

Ashley enjoyed his time as a clean-up boy under Terry Gardiner, seeing a career for himself when accepting an offer for an apprenticeship.

He learnt his craft well and was a seasoned butcher when Terry's health failed. It was a natural move for Ashley and Belynda to take on the challenge of business ownership.

"Terry passed on and we just took over. We're glad we bought the business," Ashley says.

"I had the advantage of knowing the business well after working here for so long, so we knew exactly what we were buying."



# Be nice to the clean-up boy – he could be the boss one day



## Ashley spreads his wings

Ashley worked to extend both the existing loyal local customer base and a large wholesale trade to hotels and sporting clubs.

A popular service is free same day delivery to customers in Port Augusta and Stirling North for orders placed by 3pm.

Shoppers have been enticed from Wilmington, Quorn and Hawker, and deliveries are made to Roxby Downs, 260km away, every Friday.

"Roxby is good for us; we get

quite a few orders a week from up there," Ashley says.

"The Roxby orders can ebb and flow with the level of mining operations that are going on. If they're busy up there, it's reflected in our sales."

As well as gourmet and value added products, an important part of the business is a range of 12 meat packs which appeal to people living outside towns.

For years, Ashley has had a motto for his schnitzel – "Best Schnitzel in Town – No Bull."

He also prides himself on his bung fritz and sausages which have won medals and trophies in the AMIC competitions over the years.

His traditional plain fritz won silver in the Bung Fritz section of last year's AMIC State smallgoods awards, and he won two bronze medals for flavoured fritz in the Innovative Products section.

Judges were impressed by both his chilli and cheese bung fritz and his smoked bung fritz.

Ashley, who sells between 90kg and 120kg of fritz weekly, says he's experimenting with new flavours for bung fritz.

"I've been mucking around with a few flavours over the last few months. I didn't enter this year's AMIC awards, but maybe next year," he says.



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