



## Soaring Seafood

Co-owners David DiCicco (left) and Craig Pitcher battle to keep pace with demand in Adelaide's south, developing Seafood Gourmet Meats into one of SA's busiest butcheries.

The "secret" to their success boils down to the simple principle of quality meat, fair prices and great customer service - backed by hard work. Their full story is across pages 4 and 5.

# \$1m BEQUEST

## Samex pledges 210 grants over 30 years

More than 200 young people in the meat industry will receive travel grants over the next 30 years under a million-dollar scholarship scheme funded by Adelaide meat trading company Samex.

The AMIC-administered scheme is the brainchild of Samex founder Rob Black as a legacy to the meat industry.

It is for people under 25, including apprentice butchers, to travel interstate or overseas for vocational training and skills enhancement.

This may involve attending meat industry events, food fairs and training workshops, or experiencing practices in shops and processing plants.

Each year for three decades, one young achiever in each of the six States will receive a \$5,000 scholarship to cover travel and associated expenses.

An additional \$5,000 grant will be made annually to one other young

meat industry "high achiever" from anywhere in Australia. This brings the overall scholarship value to \$35,000 annually.

Over the pledged 30 years, 210 young people will benefit from the total sponsorship of \$1,050,000.

To kick-start the scheme, SA's Apprentice of the Year Ryan Doherty received the first \$5,000 grant which he used to attend a major food fair in Dubai in February (*see story page 3*).

AMIC says the necessary "legal paperwork" has been completed to ensure the scholarship program runs for three decades as wanted by Rob Black.

Rob, who has been ill for some time, declined to be interviewed for this story, asking that we focus on alerting young people to opportunities under the scheme.

A qualified master butcher who worked in his family's shops in the Brighton area,

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## \$1m BEQUEST

From page 1

Rob founded Samex in 1978 and remains Managing Director.

Samex has grown into one of Australia's main meat trading companies, exporting well over \$100 million of meat annually to 45 countries. It remains based in Adelaide and has offices in Dubai, China and Egypt.

Last year, Rob approached AMIC SA's Executive Director Paul Sandercocock about an idea for a long-running scholarship scheme, asking if AMIC would administer it.

The AMIC/Samex Young Achiever Scholarship program took shape, open to young people who have been working in the meat industry for at least five years and display outstanding qualities.

It's something retail butchers know; now it's confirmed by new national statistics...

Chicken consumption is continuing to grow at the expense of traditional red meat and is on target to double beef sales by 2020.

"Growth in chicken consumption is primarily a response to retail prices remaining well below those of beef, lamb and pork," says the Australian

## Chicken rules the roost

Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES).

Statistics in ABARES' March Agricultural Commodities report show consumption of beef, lamb and mutton is falling because of rising prices.

It says red meat prices are expected to remain high in the short term due to rising exports and the impact of drought in cutting the national beef cattle herd and sheep flock to low levels.

The falling national sheep flock of just 70 million and the beef cattle herd of 23.7 million coincides with fast rising pork and poultry production.

"Combined with strong international demand for Australian beef and live cattle exports, this is expected to place upward pressure on cattle prices," ABARES says.

However, ABARES predicts retail beef prices to remain around current levels and lamb to increase slightly over the next two years.

Latest data shows the substan-

The principle is that seeing how things are done elsewhere will advance skills, knowledge and experience – and "open eyes" to a world of opportunities.

"This sponsorship initiative by Rob and Samex is really amazing and extraordinary," Paul says.

"To get the ball rolling and set a national template, it was decided to award the first \$5,000 scholarship to whoever won the 2015 SA Apprentice of the Year competition.

"This was won by Ryan Doherty, who went on to win the national title in Brisbane before travelling to the Gulfood trade show in Dubai this year.

"Ryan will be an ambassador for the scholarship scheme, writing several reports on his experience and making several speeches."

\*Applications for 2016 scholarships opened in February and will close on April 8. Application forms are on the AMIC website or from AMIC.

tially lower retail price of chicken meat is resulting in increasing consumption.

Some butchers are now featuring chicken - and pork - more prominently in their displays.

Looking ahead, ABARES expects poultry consumption to reach a high of almost 50kg per person by 2020, a sharp contrast from the early 1950s when it was only a few kilograms.

Australia is already the world's

third largest consumer of chicken after Malaysia and Jamaica.

ABARES says beef consumption will have more than halved from 59.7kg in 1950-51 to just 25.7kg per person by 2020.

Lamb consumption is forecast to remain static at 9.2kg per person and mutton at just half a kilogram per person.

Pork consumption is predicted to rise to 28.3kg per person by 2020.

**ABARES says consumers are increasingly choosing fresh chicken over frozen or processed chicken.**



**MBL's Darryl Vaitkus shows his versatility – page 10**

# RYAN'S FLYING HIGH

## Apprentice of the Year uses Samex scholarship to visit Dubai trade fair

Ryan Doherty's apprenticeship training has involved learning to get the little things right – now he's looking at the big picture.

Days after winning the 2016 National Apprentice of the Year title in Brisbane in February, Ryan was on his way to one of the world's biggest food trade shows in Dubai.

He visited the Gulfood trade show at Dubai's imposing World Trade Centre as the inaugural recipient of an AMIC/Samex Young Achiever Scholarship (*as detailed on pages 1 and 2*).

"It was my first overseas trip – a 13-hour flight each way – and it was a real eye opener in many ways," says Ryan, 19, of Bruce's Meat at Pasadena.

"The trade show was so massive, it was crazy. There were thousands of stands by food wholesalers and exporters from around the world.

"There were lots of meat industry displays, mainly featuring primals. Each display was only four metres long but the overall presentation was huge.

"I gained an idea of what goes on beyond the four walls of a butcher shop – what goes on to get meat into the shop."

Gulfood is the Middle East's largest food



*As pleased as Punch... National Apprentice of the Year Ryan Doherty.*

show, targeting the food, beverage, food service and hospitality sectors.

More than 5,000 exhibitors from 120 countries and five continents attended this year's four-day event, unveiling the latest tastes, trends and innovations.

Ryan says, "I flew to Dubai with a few Adelaide blokes who worked at the Samex exhibit. I simply followed their lead which was good for a first-time flyer.

"We stayed in the same hotel and I went with them to the trade fair each day.

"I spent each morning looking around the

exhibits – it was a great experience.

"I did my own thing in the afternoons, spending time exploring Dubai.

"It's a great place with great modern architecture – it's amazing how it sprung up in the desert so quickly."

As well as facilitating industry knowledge, an aim of the scholarship is to "enhance global awareness through the sharing of knowledge and cultures."

"I feel really privileged to be given the first scholarship. It's a great thing Samex is doing for apprentices," Ryan says.



*Ryan on his way to winning AMIC's national apprentice title in Brisbane.*



Craig Pitcher... "The business is built on a strong base of loyal customers. We know the day and time some come in."

David DiCicco was struck by the business potential of Seaford Gourmet Meats when he began working there as a casual butcher 17 years ago.

"I worked here for a few years and I knew it would be a good shop to own, so I moved quickly when it came onto the market," David says.

"It was doing an average of \$7,500 a week but this jumped significantly in our first week (of ownership) so we knew we were on a winner straight away."

Located in Seaford Central shopping centre, the shop has grown into one of SA's busiest butcheries since David took over 15 years ago this October.

It can be a battle to meet demand. For example, the shop stopped taking Christmas orders last year after hitting full capacity.

The butchery has grown as Seaford has grown as a new housing hub of the south. The shopping centre was expanded to include two supermarkets,

# SOARING SEAFORD

Woolworths and Foodland.

A quality fresh food mall has evolved, featuring Seaford Gourmet Meats, Barossa Fine Foods, a large greengrocery, a bakery, and several cafes and eateries.

When David bought the butchery in 2001, he ran it with his wife Sam and business partners Nigel and Tracey Walters, who owned the then Seaford Shopping Centre.

This initial crew of four has



grown to 12, with butcher Craig Pitcher becoming David's business partner after Nigel and Tracey withdrew about 10 years ago.

David, 50, mainly runs production operations out the back while Craig, 49, oversees the shop. Their respective wives, Sam and Terrie, work there several days a week.

The "secret" to their success is really no secret at all – it comes down to simple "old fashioned" principles backed by hard work.

"Our motto sums us up – *Where Price, Quality and Service Really Matters*. If you don't get these basics right, you're hitting your head against a brick wall," says Craig.

David says his team tries hard to earn the trust of customers.

"We say to the guys, 'If you make a mistake, don't question – just apologise and replace.' We all make mistakes," he says.

"If customers ask what's the best, tell them – 

➤ don't try to sell them something else. Just be honest..."

David did his apprenticeship during 10 years at Mitcham Meat Store which was one of SA's busiest shops. He then worked with Bruce's Meat founder Bruce Berry at Mitcham.

Craig worked at shops and supermarkets before joining a lamb wholesaler based at Normanville. He supplied lamb to David at Seaford.

"I missed the retail side, so I grabbed the chance to join David here," he says.

Together they have seen the shop's turnover grow in proportion with the growth of the area – by a conservative 15% in recent years.

Trade was so strong last Christmas that the pair have already organised for extra cold room facilities to be available for next festive season.

"It was a massive Christmas. The cold rooms were full, choc-a-block," David says.

"We had so many orders going out, it was a blur - a logistical nightmare. We had to stop taking orders."

The shop, which sources free range turkeys from Pooginagoric near Bordertown and pork from O'Briens at Burton, runs its Christmas operation with military precision.

"We have been doing it for so long, we know exactly where we need to be in the countdown to Christmas," David says.

"We have a schedule in three

books and on a large whiteboard. If we can't get Christmas orders exactly right, we won't get customers' business during the rest of the year."

Craig says the business is built on a strong base of loyal customers.

"We know the day and time that some regulars come in," he says.

David says, "We have 40 or 50 regular customers who have moved out of this area but come back to buy their meat here.

"Every second Tuesday, four or five former locals share a vehicle for the trip up from Victor Harbor just to buy our meat."

Craig says another former local who now lives in Adelaide's north makes a three-hour round drive to Seaford every few months purely to buy meat.

"The other Saturday, she bought \$700 worth of meat – she made her way from one end of the counter to the other. She particularly loves our roasts," he says.

"We pack it all, carry it to her car and help her put it into Eskies which fill the back.

"She buys enough to last her for a few months, then she'll drive back again..."

The shop is heavily involved in the local community, sponsoring several sporting clubs and various community events.

It also aids worthy causes, with the main focus on breast cancer awareness and fundraising for Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA).



David DiCicco mainly runs production operations out the back. He can monitor the shop thanks to CCTV.



\*Sam DiCicco, who had breast cancer, has raised more than \$10,000 through activities at Seaford Gourmet Meats for BCNA.

She is now helping organise AMIC's inaugural The Pink Butcher charity program in October.

An inspiring feature on Sam and her fundraising drives will be in the next MBL News.

# Son recruits dad to revive Riverland shop

Riverland butcher Shane Muller says his “reborn” shop is ticking along nicely – with the help of a “promising apprentice” aged 73.

“I rev up Dad by calling him my apprentice. But seriously, I couldn’t do what I’m doing without his really great support,” says Shane, 44.

Des Muller was a butcher all his working life, doing his apprenticeship in the 1960s in the Berri shop which Shane reopened last year after it had sat idle for two years.

Shane did his apprenticeship at his father’s Monash shop, learning the ropes from a fastidious “old school” butcher who made a reputation for his quality smallgoods.

“Dad now comes in to help me one or two days a week, so I reckon he’s my apprentice now,” Shane says.

“We make smallgoods on Monday mornings and as he lives nearby in Monash, he can come in at short notice to give a hand.

“Last Saturday was particularly busy so I called Dad in – we served 40 customers in an hour and half.”

Berri North Meat Store closed its doors in September 2013 after being run as a one-man shop for 49 years by Dean Tschirpig, the last of a long line of family butchers.

The shop remained closed until Shane reopened it last August. It basically remains a one-man shop although Shane receives assorted help from his wife Dee and his grown up children Ryan and Tamara, as well as his father.

MBL Machinery Manager Chris Mountford says when Shane was setting up the shop, he bought “the whole kit and caboodle” from MBL.

“Shane and Dee are really top people who run a great little shop,” Chris says.

“They bought everything from MBL, from machinery including a mixer mincer,

## Shane’s a chip off the old block



*Back working together... Shane Muller with his “apprentice” dad Des.*

sausage filler, slicer and tenderiser, right through to knives and display ware.

“I think the only thing they didn’t buy was the old bowl cutter used by Shane’s father in the same shop over 50 years ago.”

Bowl cutter? What bowl cutter? Des explains: “It’s the same bowl cutter that I

used when I started my apprenticeship under Joe Elsworthy in this shop in 1963 – it still works 53 years later and we still use it!

“There have been three owners of the shop over the years and there wasn’t much here when Shane arrived last year – but the old bowl cutter somehow survived.”

Shane began his apprenticeship with his father in 1987, working with him at his Monash shop for 15 years.

“I wanted a change and I worked at the old Berri Ltd juice company for seven years. On the side, I kept my hand in by working one day slaughtering for Lindner Meats at Renmark,” Shane says.

“The slaughterhouse was out of town, right on the bend of the



➤ river. It had great views over the water to cliffs on the other side.”

Shane then worked fulltime for seven years in the now-closed Lindner Meats shop before reopening the old butcher shop at Berri North.

It's a destination shop in Berri's industrial area, removed from other food shops.

Berri has one other independent butcher – Plaza Quality Meats in a mall.

“The business is doing really well, but I was nervous when we were starting up – you never really know how many customers you'll get,” Shane says.

“But Dad and I had a good reputation, especially for smallgoods, from our days at Monash and a lot of people remembered us, becoming our customers again.

“We did some local radio advertising when we opened but now we do well from word of mouth and Facebook.”

Last Christmas was Shane's first at Berri North and he says he was pleased with trade.

“We decided to make 100 legs of ham and they all sold. It was just as well that we ended up making 18 extra ones because they all sold, too,” he says.

“We'll have to make more hams next Christ-



mas because word has spread around the district.”

Shane says the shop attracts more than 200 customers in an average week. “It's all going well, although I haven't made my fortune,” he quips.

He chooses cattle and lambs at the fortnightly Loxton market, with slaughtering carried out at Chris Schwarz's Loxton Abattoir, which “buys everything” from MBL.

“I pride myself on quality – I like to hang the beef as long as I can,” Shane says.

“I look after my customers, making sure they get quality. I won't sell anything I wouldn't eat myself.”

Shane thanks his family for their solid support. Dee does the bookwork and spends several days in the shop – serving, crumbing schnitzels and making patties.

Their son Ryan drives from Adelaide to help on most Saturdays and daughter Tamara designs promotional posters and business cards which feature her animal drawings.



“Shane works pretty hard, starting every day at 5.30am. The business is now only big enough for him on a fulltime basis but we hope will be able to hire someone else,” Dee says.

Shane says a key to expansion is planned production of mettwurst and pepperoni.

“At Monash, Dad and I had a reputation for our mettwurst products, making 100kg weekly in the late 1990s,” he says.

“We'll soon start production again, using our old recipes for garlic mettwurst and pepperoni.

“This is our next little project and we're looking forward to it.”

**‘I look after my customers, making sure they get quality. I won't sell anything I wouldn't eat myself’**  
- Shane Muller



# DAVE TAKES CONTROL

## Rent shock sparks expansion to freehold shop

A desire to be his “own master” by owning a freehold shop has sparked Bridgewater butcher Dave Benham’s successful expansion to Coromandel Valley.

Dave, 43, who has run Bridgewater Quality Meats for over a decade, was stunned a few years ago when rents at the Bridgewater shopping centre increased by 40%.

“Rents were increased to be in line with (shops in) Stirling and Mt Barker but the Bridgewater centre has never had the same flow of customers,” he says.

“The landlord said he had lots of inquiries from people wanting to rent at Bridgewater. But the newsagent next door to me shut and the space has now been vacant for three years.

“Luckily, I had paid for the business when times were better so I was able to keep the shop going. It still makes money and I’ll be there for a while yet.

“But the landlord issue left a bitter taste in my mouth and led to me looking at buying a freehold shop for my long term future.

“I liked the idea of having no landlord to deal with – I’d be master of my own destiny.”

Dave discovered a shortage of freehold butcher shops in the Adelaide region. Some that came onto the market were too pricey.

“There were some in the eastern suburbs but they were over \$1 million,” he says.

The freehold dream was put on the backburner, but Dave’s luck changed when free standing Coro Meats, on the road linking Blackwood and Flagstaff Hill, came up for sale 18 months ago.

Dave lives nearby on a 4ha (10 acre) property and he knew the Coromandel Valley shop well, driving past it every day on his way to

Bridgewater. He could readily see the potential...

“The plan was to eventually sell Bridgewater and concentrate on Coro, near my home, up to my retirement,” he says.

All is going to plan, with Dave expecting to own the Coromandel Valley property outright in eight years.

He began in the meat industry in 1992 at wholesaler Subway Meats where he spent six years before working for Phil White and later Barry Nichols at Stirling Variety Meats.

He worked at the Stirling shop with Chris Pfitzner, who now owns the thriving business.

Dave now employs three butchers and three apprentices across his two shops, saying juggling his time between the two locations can be testing.

Within a fairly short time of taking over Coro Meats, he significantly increased turnover by replacing packaged Victorian meat with the quality Adelaide Hills beef and lamb he has long sold at Bridgewater.

“I source beef and lamb from farmers in the Mt Torrens and Woodside >



Dave Benham at his Bridgewater shop.

➤ areas. They are fourth and fifth generation farmers who know how to produce consistent quality,” Dave says.

“Customers like to know where their meat comes from and we are able to tell them. They like quality local meat.

“People around here want quality and the area is growing, with high-end houses being built.

“The immediate area here (around Coro Meats) has been a bit dead but a charcoal chicken shop has just reopened and a large bakery is setting up across the road.

“Having two new food shops so close to us can only attract more people and help our turnover.

“It’s a very community minded area – I’ve always tried to support as many local sporting clubs and groups as I can.”

Dave, who makes his own small-goods, says trade across his two shops “can be up and down.”



**Busy butchers inside... aprons hanging out to dry at Bridgewater Quality Meats catch the eye of passersby. The aprons can't be put in clothes driers at the laundromat as they'd shrink, so upon their return they're hung out the back.**

“But overall I’m pretty happy with the way things are going.” he says.

“Like most butchers, you can have a busy period and then

things go quiet – Mad March is now my quietest time of the year.

“I plan to start a refit of Coro Meats this year. I want a flash

shop with chrome, mirrors and slate – old style, a little like the Victor Churchill shop in Sydney.

“I want people to walk through the door and go, Wow!”

# Why SA's the king of sausages

Franz Knoll's latest national Sausage King triumph has given South Australians an incredible six Traditional Australian wins in a row.

Traditional Australian is regarded as the most prestigious of the six Sausage King categories as it best represents the huge barbecue market.



AMIC estimates Australians spend \$660 million annually on 94 million kilograms of sausages – most are traditional beef for the barbecue.

Franz, wearing his Standom Smallgoods hat, won the Traditional crown at the national final in Brisbane in February. He won the same title in 2001.

But a bigger talking point at the awards night was the fact that SA had won six consecutive Traditional titles.

Clare's Jason Mathie won three successive titles (from 2011 to 2013), followed by Anthony Skara of Skara Artisan Smallgoods in 2014 and Shaun Watson of Tender Cuts, Naracoorte, last year.

Franz (left) says, “Given the high standard of the competition, it's incredible that South Australians have won six Traditional titles in a row.”

The common denominator with all these winners is that they all use MBL Special Gluten Free as their base.

Franz says SA's success also underscores

the high standard of local meat which butchers are able to work with.

Jason Mathie (below) agrees that quality meat is the key. He won his three national Traditional crowns with saltbush mutton which he continues to source from station country near Burra.

He used the same meat to win the 2016 national Best Burger crown at the Sausage King awards night.



# Shaun preserves history of his shop

The sense of history is strong at Meadows in the Adelaide Hills, with Shaun Harrison's butcher shop one of the points of interest on a 2.5km heritage walking trail.

A sign, pictured right on a fence next to the shop, gives an insight into butcher Clive Giles who built the shop and adjoining house in 1937.

It has continuously operated as a butcher shop ever since and is now heritage listed.

Shaun, who has a keen interest in history, says the sign regularly encourages people wanting to know more to step inside Meadows Country Meats.

"A woman from Canberra came in recently, saying her husband was Clive's nephew. I told her what I knew and she was very interested," he says.

"Another time, a rep from Cappo's came in and said he thought his grandfather once had a butcher shop somewhere in this area but he knew no more.

"The rep was Jason Giles and he was surprised to learn that he was standing in his grandfather's shop. He enjoyed hearing what I knew about Clive's business."

Clive has passed away but Shaun seized a chance to meet him and "talk shop" several years ago.

"My wife Laura worked in aged care at Strathalbyn and she was looking after Clive at a nursing home. Through Laura, he agreed to see me," Shaun says.

"He was getting on in years and his mind wandered a bit but he was pretty clear in his memories about his life as a butcher in Meadows.

"He spoke about a slaughterhouse behind the shop.

"He said he'd start the day with the kill at 3am and come into the shop at 7am.

"It was a busy little shop in the 1940s and 1950s, with seven fulltime butchers.

"He said there was another butcher shop up the road with six butchers."

Today, Shaun runs Meadows' sole butchery with help from apprentice Nathan Griggs.

The two find it amazing their town once supported 13 butchers.

Taking pride of place in the shop is the main photo used on the heritage sign out front, showing three of Clive's delivery vans in the 1940s.

Clive had up to five vans which delivered meat around the surrounding district to places like Echunga, Macclesfield, Ashbourne, Hope Forest, Yundi and Kuitpo.

Shaun, 36, says, "I love history – it's great. I buy old photos of Meadows whenever I get the chance.

"I have seven old photos hanging in the shop. Customers enjoy them and often make a comment."

Meadows dates to 1839 when it was first surveyed. The first buildings appeared in the early 1840s.

Shaun's shop is one of 11 signed points of interest on the Meadows Heritage Walking Trail.

The others include a church, cemetery, schoolhouse, general store, council chambers and memorial hall.

## Meadows Butchers

This butcher's shop is one of several in the history of Meadows. It was built in 1937 by the Giles family. Originally they ran the shop from the side room of the house.



Butchers slaughtered cattle and pigs purchased from local farmers or at the local cattle market. Geese, duck, chicken, quail, pigeon and rabbit meat were also sold. They delivered meat to customers as far afield as Echunga, Macclesfield, Ashbourne, Hope Forest, Yundi, Kuitpo and Prospect Hill.

The Giles family had up to five vans to deliver meat to customers.



Meadows Heritage Walk



Shaun Harrison at his heritage-listed shop in Meadows.

## Butchery basics at Regency

Young people interested in becoming retail butchers can enrol in a basic 10-week training course starting soon at Regency TAFE.

The Certificate II Meat Processing (Meat Retailing) course will be held from April 26 to June 29, from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

The cost is \$281, with equipment supplied. Details from Deborah Kingston at TAFE on 8348 4057.

The course will also be held from July 25 to September 29, and from October 10 to December 8.

## End of era at Renmark

After about 80 years, the Lindner family's connection with retail meat sales in Renmark has ended.

Colin Linder ceased trading at Lindner Meats on January 30, electing to sell the premises and equipment rather than offering the business as an on-going concern.

MBL News last year told the story of the Lindner family's Renmark history, beginning with Colin's uncle Bert opening Renmark Meat House in the early 1930s.

This business was bought by Colin's father Dick in 1938. The shop had several locations, with Colin taking over a purpose-built new shop in 1967.

Colin, now 82, suffered a stroke several years ago. "I decided to close because you can't run a business by remote control," he says.

The shop's equipment will be auctioned on April 12. Details from Nigel Rollbusch of Elders Loxton on 0438 847 779.

# Turning up the heat

Kalleske Meats, with roots in the Barossa Valley in the 1920s, is adapting to more adventurous tastes by launching a new chilli mettwurst.

With people's palates hotting up, owner Gerald Thomson is turning up the heat with the new chilli product which will be released in mid-April at Coles initially.

But despite robust sales to butchers as well as Coles, Woolworths and Foodland, Gerald has put the business up for sale as he eyes retirement.

"I've had the business for 24 years and it has been a hard slog through testing times to make it the success it is today," he says.

Kalleske's, at Smithfield in Adelaide's north, faced ruin after the Garibaldi affair of 1995. Custom dropped by 90% overnight.

"I mortgaged my house. We had good products and we stuck to it," says Gerald, a strong support-

er of MBL over many years.

"We ended up redeveloping the plant, adding three more buildings and streamlining operations to make the business a success."

The business, which produces up to 12 tonnes of mettwurst products weekly, is for sale as an on-going concern, with training, support and transition offered.

Gerald, 54, a decorated CFS volunteer for 34 years, began his working life as a garbageman in Elizabeth and worked his way up.

In recent years, he has been rebuilding a home on a 40ha (100 acre) property on the banks of the River Murray near Blanchetown.

The property, a former vineyard, enjoys great water views and stunning sunsets. Gerald has built a jetty for his tinnie – retirement here he comes!



The importance of eating meat has been underscored by a British survey that found 53% of the male population suffers from Lack of Meat Syndrome.

Symptoms of the deficiency include lack of energy, sadness, mood swings and even anger.

The survey of 2,000 men, by UK hotel chain Sizzling Pubs, identified sirloin steak as hitting men's "meat spot."

It found that a quarter of men were left feeling unsatisfied after not eating meat. One in 10 said they felt irritable, and 16% lacked energy.

It also found that one in five men would rather go shoe

## BEWARE: Lack of Meat Syndrome

shopping with their partner than miss out on eating meat.

The findings were duly reported in the British tabloid media – so they must be right!

Dietitian Dr Carrie Ruxton says the survey highlighted that almost 100% of men eat meat.

"Current trends show that fewer than 3% of men opt for a meat free diet, and this dietary

preference can be traced right back through human evolution," she says.

"Men have eaten meat from caveman times when game provided up to two thirds of daily calories as part of an omnivorous diet.

"Nobody ever painted a carrot on a cave wall, so meat has always had a special role in most men's diets."



Darryl Vaitkus keeps adding new strings to his bow, making him a valuable contributor to day-to-day operations at MBL's Athol Park headquarters.

Variety is indeed the spice of working life for Darryl, who took a short term job in the MBL warehouse over Christmas five years ago and stayed.

His versatility and keenness to learn now sees his time divided between four areas – purchasing, inwards goods handling, blending-room scheduling and production, and Quality Assurance with nutritional labels and lab testing.

“When I joined MBL, I wanted to learn as much as I could as fast as I could,” says Darryl, 28.

“The range of work is great. MBL has shown trust in me to train me up in different areas.”

Darryl began his working life in his parents’ feather and down quilt shop at Daw Park, “working the machines and doing anything that was needed.”

“An important thing I learnt was that the business you work for is your livelihood – you must work hard and treat it like it’s your own business because if it falters, you are affected,” he says.

“But I didn’t want to take over the family business and I did some labouring work before doing some casual work at MBL.

“It was only going to be work over Christmas, driving forklifts and warehouse picking, but MBL offered to keep me on.

“Although I hadn’t been here long, I knew MBL was a good place to work with lots of opportunities.”

Most of Darryl’s working week usually

# “Meat the Team”

## Profiles on MBL staff members

revolves around purchasing machinery and diverse products from Australia and overseas. MBL sells more than 5,000 products.

“I purchase machinery made in Australia while David Curtis purchases overseas machinery,” he says.

“I also purchase general merchandise – there are three of us, plus David, and we each have specific suppliers we work with.

“I do all the production scheduling for the blending room and because I have worked in production there, I fill in if they’re short staffed or if someone’s off sick.”

Darryl also helps with the handling of inwards goods, mainly when containers need to be emptied to strict deadlines.

“There’s usually a couple of containers a week. I help when I can but it varies – last week, we unloaded seven containers which need to be turned around quickly,” he says.

Darryl recently began assisting in MBL’s QA unit, headed by Michaela Rock, after completing a two-day course in Melbourne on nutritional labelling laws.

MBL produces a range of labels for butchers and the wider food industry.

“There have been a lot of changes to labelling laws including complete, in-depth ingredient lists, nutrition panels and all declarable allergens,” Darryl says.

“Labelling requirements can be complex

and after doing the course, I’m able to help Michaela.

“I also help Chris Richmond in the lab, checking products for quality assurance.”

He says he hopes to have a long career at MBL as the Co-op continues to expand.

“There’s plenty of variety here and with new things happening, there’ll be plenty of opportunities into the future,” he says.

### Q & A

**Do you have a special interest or hobby?** I enjoy online computer games, play basketball and I’m a fan of sci-fi fantasy movies.

**What would you do with a spare \$50,000?** I’d pay off the car, do up the house and throw some money at the mortgage.

**If you were a car, what would you be?** I’d be the DeLorean, the time machine car in the Back To The Future movies.

**What food can’t you live without?** Koldunai. It’s my favourite dish – a creamy bacon, almost ravioli-like Lithuanian dish. My Mum makes the best!

**If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** It’s a toss-up between basketballer Michael Jordan or comic book legend Stan Lee.

**What’s the best thing about working at MBL?** The diversity of the work and the people working here. We get on well together and there’s a good atmosphere.